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TOY STORY

Volume 27 Number 2



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"GOLDENEYE"

ROBIN WILLIAMS
"JUMANJI"

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CINEFANTASTIQUE

007th

GOLDENEYE

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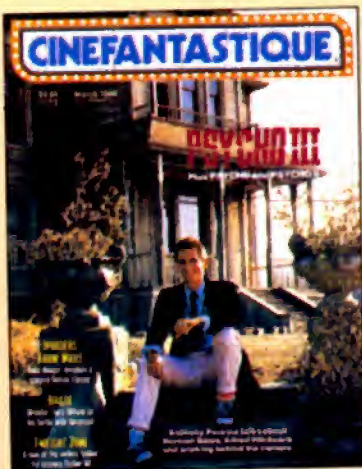
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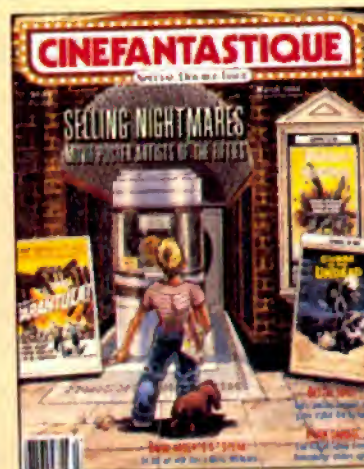
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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

NOVEMBER 1995

Welcome to this issue's latest dispatch from the front lines of the computer revolution, a preview of the making of Disney's TOY STORY, the first cartoon feature entirely animated with computers. The movie doesn't open until November 22, but judging from the footage we've seen, the film has the dimensional quality that made audiences sit up and take notice of ROGER RABBIT, not to mention those wonderful George Pal Puppets of the '30s and '40s that were made by carving animated figures out of wood. It's amazing to think that that kind of artistry is now available to filmmakers at the touch of a computer keystroke.

San Francisco correspondent Lawrence French goes behind the scenes of Bay area Pixar, the film's co-producer that provided the high-tech know-how to make computer 'toons a reality. French traces the three year development of the feature as well as the background of Pixar, which began as a subsidiary of Lucasfilm. Pixar founder and technical guru Dr. Edwin E. Catmull talks about the implications of the computer imaging revolution he helped get started, and sizes up the CGI competition. And director John Lasseter and his talented Pixar imaging team explain how the computer is just another—albeit powerful—tool for visual artists.

Also previewed this issue, the eagerly awaited next chapter in the saga of superspy 007, with GOLDENEYE's Bond girls Famke Janssen and Izabella Scorupco sizing up co-star Pierce Brosnan in his debut as Ian Fleming's enduring secret agent. And Dan Persons takes a look at the filming of JUMANJI, Chris Van Allsburg's intriguing kid's book, given the Hollywood big-budget treatment and starring Robin Williams.

And for those of you who can't get too much of a good thing, this issue *Cinefantastique* begins a monthly publication schedule, as you can see from the ad on the facing page. Next issue's cover story on GOLDENEYE appears November 15.

Frederick S. Clarke



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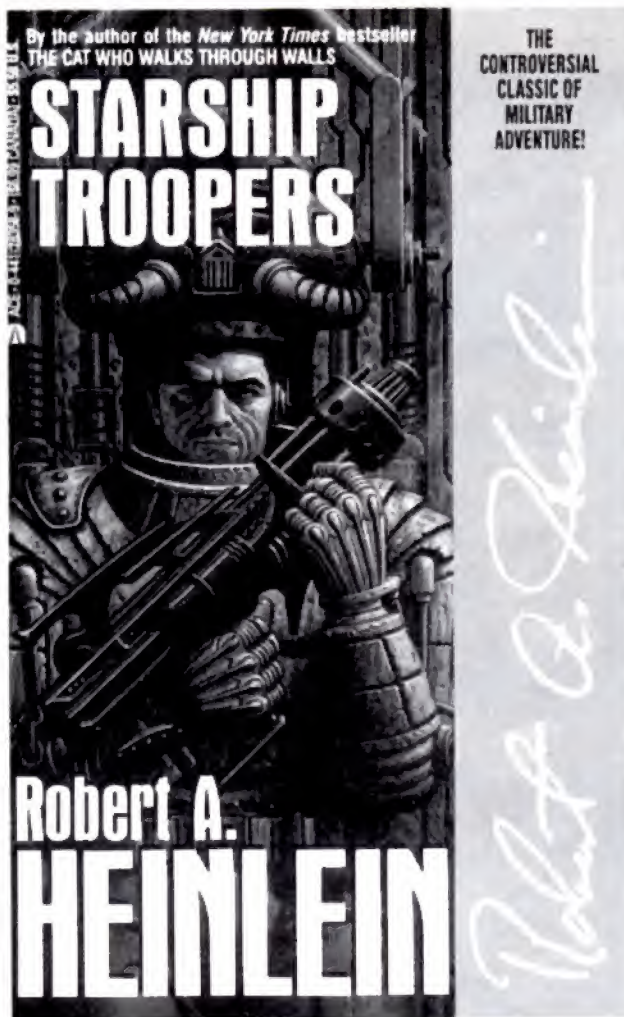
By Dan Persons

Maybe it's just the after-effect of that screening of *BATMAN RETURNS* (after all, we're racing a late July deadline here): like Jim Carrey, I feel vexed by too many questions. And these aren't minor guys either; these are *biggies*. Things like: can a re-teaming of the principals who made the original *ROBOCOP* such a kick work the same magic on a Robert Heinlein classic? Can the recently established arm of one of the industry's most successful mini-majors prove that genre films don't necessarily need a mega-million budget and/or Arnold Schwarzenegger and/or an explosion every 30 seconds to draw the public? And if those Little Caesar's pizzas were any good, would they really need to make their commercials so damn funny? That last question, I fear, is beyond our purview. The other two deserve further consideration.

THE FEW, THE PROUD THE TEEN BUG ZAPPERS

We were right on one count and wrong on another, last column. Yes, TriStar did have qualms about the considerable budget being proposed for the film adaptation of Robert Heinlein's classic, *Starship Troopers*. No, the frontsperson for the rock group Yes, Jon Anderson, wasn't planning to do a George Harrison and step into the producer's circle. The name we had meant to write was Jon Davison, the man who brought *ROBOCOP* to the screen, and who has now reestablished ties with ROBO helmer Paul Verhoeven and co-penner Ed Neumeier in order to bring one of the cornerstones of science fiction literature to the screen. The film, intended as a tent-pole release, should hit theatres in 1997.

According to Neumeier, the project was no spur-of-the-moment thing. "It's been about three years since I had a conversation with Jon in the parking lot and proposed to him that we do something along the lines of *STARSHIP TROOPERS*. My sense of it was that *STARSHIP TROOPERS* was certainly owned by somebody, and it would be a big, legal morass to get into. I was interested in essentially doing a teenage romance and a *real* war picture—and by 'real' I mean real blood and guts and fighting a real enemy that was terrifying. If you look at military pictures of the last few years, they're defined very much by Vietnam, as they should be, and they're usually focusing on a small group, an elite team. I wanted to do something that was more 'mankind goes to war.' Davison was also intrigued by that idea, and he came back to me and said,



Robert Heinlein's science fiction classic becomes a megapic from the *ROBOCOP* team of director Paul Verhoeven and producer Jon Davison.

'Hey, listen. I checked into the rights on *STARSHIP* and they're available. No one's ever gone after them.' It was shocking."

Shocked was apparently the word for TriStar's reaction to the budget. Producer Davison will say only that the price falls somewhere below \$100 million—something of a bargain, all things considered, yet, as Neumeier noted, the studio's response in light of recent history, is understandable. "Everybody was dragging their feet about budgets. I think that we were in the doldrums of the post-*WATERWORLD* reaction, and here we were proposing another tricky thing. We were saying, 'Look, we *know* you want to see Paul Verhoeven make this movie. It's a big tent-pole kind of movie, the kind of movie that you need to make and sell around the world, and the problem is that it's going to cost you a lot of money and there's not a place in it for Arnold Schwarzenegger. I think they were looking at that and thinking, 'Oh, shit. Do I want to base my career on Paul Verhoeven and a bunch of teenagers fighting giant bugs in outer space?' That was a tough call, but I think that what's interesting is that there were three people who acted rather heroically in a business that doesn't usually have many heroes."

Those people were execs at both TriStar

and Disney, who decided to join corporate forces on a deal that will see the production of not only *TROOPERS*, but also John Hughes' *PETER PAN*. Now in full, pre-production phase, *TROOPERS* may begin principal photography in late March or April '96. No actors have been attached (sources say the producers are looking at such films as *CLUELESS*, *DAZED AND CONFUSED*, and even *MENACE II SOCIETY* for possible talent), but at least one further behind-the-lens superstar has been tapped as a go for the project: "Phil Tippett has designed the bugs and is going to do all the stuff having to do with bugs," noted Neumeier. "We did a test that Paul shot and Phil did—and that I'm in as a dead soldier—and it's really cool. It's 52 seconds long, and it's everything you want to know about a guy fighting a giant, warrior bug with a big machine gun."

GENRE COME-LATELY

Nothing like a few high-profile hits to boost a studio's confidence factor. Fresh off such successes as *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE*, *THE CRYING GAME* and *PULP FICTION*, New York-based Miramax has decided to branch out. To further the cause of French filmmakers in the States (and perhaps to assuage those Gallic critics pissed because American studios are more likely to buy ideas than they are to distribute films), the company has established Miramax Zoe. To handle those "problem" productions that newly acquired parent company Disney won't allow to be distributed under the Miramax banner (such as the NC-17 rated *KIDS*), it formed the Excaliber label. And now, in an attempt to carve itself a niche in the genre field, the company has started up Dimension Films. Around for a couple of years, the offshoot has already cut its teeth on such projects as *HELLRAISER 3*, and the recently released *THE PROPHECY*. If all goes as planned, the titles will keep coming, to the tune of about five to six productions a year.

"I've always been a huge fan of genre films," said Dimension's director of production, Richard Potter. "They're the films that made me want to go into films. From *STAR WARS* to 2001, all the way back to Todd Browning's *FREAKS*. It always seems to be where the cutting-edge is, and where the new ideas are coming from.

"The kind of things we're doing—the classic science fiction stories and some of the new cutting-edge stuff—is so exciting to me. I love this stuff. I love the fact that we're looking at new and exciting ways to tell these stories... Bob and Harvey [Wein-

ATTRACTIONS

stein, founders of Miramax] have taught me so much just being in a room with them, seeing how they view films, making sure it's a good story. That attitude is a part of Dimension. It's not how many special effects we pile on, it's whether it's a good story. Personally, I'm thrilled by that."

Projects coming up through the spring of next year include the next installment of the HELLRAISER series, and a follow-up to THE CROW. On the non-sequel front, expect FROM DUSK TIL DAWN, the eagerly awaited feature that teams up producers Quentin Tarantino and Lawrence Bender with EL MARIACHI director Robert Rodriguez; an adaptation of Dean Koontz' PHANTOMS; and LIGHTYEARS, an anthology project matching the works of such authors as Isaac Asimov and Phil Dick with such current genre pioneers as CRONOS director Guillermo del Toro. With budgets arriving somewhere around industry average for decently funded theatrical features (DUSK has been rumored to come in at around \$18 million), Dimension product, Potter said, will not tread the same path as what spills forth from Concorde or Full Moon: "The idea is to do the same quality as Miramax. Corman has his own niche in the genre, which I think is really valuable to the genre—I like a lot of those films. But I think Dimension is trying to tell the best story in the best way."

TRAILERS

Director Anthony Waller, whose clever comedy-thriller MUTE WITNESS is in current release (and is well-worth checking out), is now at work on AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS. The sequel to John Landis' 1981 AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON will have the daughter of the original film's Jenny Agutter and David Naughton on the loose in the City of Lights. Will she be stopped by silver bullets or the withering contempt of the natives? ...Fox is still intending to go ahead with another ALIEN sequel, again starring Sigourney Weaver. They might want to consult with one T.J. Bradley, who a year ago sent us a script that was uncannily prescient in anticipating the "Gee, it was only a dream" plot-twist that scripter Joss Whedon allegedly



It was only a dream—Ripley's back in ALIEN 4.



Quentin Tarantino and ER's George Clooney with Salma Hayek in director Robert Rodriguez's FROM DUSK TILL DAWN, opening December 22 from Dimension Films, a tale of vampirism set south of the border.

will use to explain away the previous installment... Universal seems to be a spawning ground for start-ups blessed with industro-charming monikers. First came DreamWorks SKG, now there's the Bubble Factory, founded by ex-Universal president Sidney Sheinberg. Among projects first up for the company are a feature treatment of FLIPPER, and a remake of THE MUMMY, with Mick Garris (SLEEPWALKERS) directing...

It started with the release of Paul Verhoeven's SHOWGIRLS. Thanks to the latest contract negotiated between the Writers Guild and the studios, writer's credits now immediately precede the director's credit in most features. Producers—whose credits used to hold pride-of-place before the director's—wonder why the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers let the flip-flop slip by. Hey, why not show *all* credits at the same time, and give the viewer special glasses revealing only those he/she thinks are important? King Solomon of the cinema, that's me... Toon-head alert: upcoming animated projects include TARZAN from Disney, and THE QUEST FOR THE GRAIL from Warner Bros. The various arms of the mammoth Viacom are tussling over the future of Sam Keith's excellent THE MAX. MTV is considering ordering up more animated episodes; or the thing could swing on over to Paramount for treatment as either and animated or (yipe!)

live-action feature... John Turteltaub will direct John Travolta in PHENOMENON, a fantasy about a guy who's struck smart by a bolt of lightning. Touchstone is the production company...

Loony-Tunes are going hyper-commercial. Hybrid projects include the animation/CGI short DUCK DODGERS IN THE THIRD DIMENSION (still in the early stages of development) and a live-action/animation feature teaming-up Bugs Bunny with Michael Jordan (and how many margaritas did the development team have to swallow to come up with *that one*?)... Saban Entertainment is being sued by Herbert Simmons, a former FBI agent who claims he developed the original concept for MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS. You mean somebody wants to take credit for that?!... Irving Azoff is closing his Giant Pictures film company, but claims he still intends on producing FROSTY THE SNOWMAN, a live-action feature with Sam Raimi slated to direct.

NEOLOGISMS 'R' US

Jeanne Tripplehorn admitted during an interview on THE TODAY SHOW that that shot of her derriere in WATERWORLD was actually done with a stand-in cast expressly for the part. She did not offer up whether the crew referred to this talented thespian as a "booty-double." □

GOLDENEYE

Famke Janssen and Izabella Scorupco on playing 007's latest femmes fatale.

By Alan Jones

The name's Janssen, Famke Janssen. And if the striking raven-haired ex-supermodel hasn't already attracted your attention playing Dorothea in Clive Barker's supernatural thriller *LORD OF ILLUSION*, then her role as Xenia Onatopp in the new James Bond adventure *GOLDENEYE* certainly will. Janssen is joined by fellow model-turned-actress Izabella Scorupco as the latest additions to a distinguished pantheon of "Bond girls" that have been a hallmark of the series since 1961's *DR. NO*, which starred Ursula Andress as Honey Rider opposite Sean Connery's 007. United Artists opens the new installment, debuting Pierce Brosnan as Bond, on November 17th.

But this is the '90s. Neither Janssen or Scorupco are your average bimbo Bond girl by any stretch of the imagination. Both on screen and off they're refreshingly different to practically every former 007 pin-up you could name. Thank director Martin Campbell for that. He didn't want vacuous Barbie dolls draped around glamorous locations for his stab at the super spy franchise.

Janssen got the part while filming *LORD OF ILLUSIONS*. "I was called in to meet director Martin Campbell and producer Barbara Broccoli. Then they asked to see some *LORD* rushes and, based on the



Sexy but professional: Polish model-turned-actress Scorupco at work with Alan Cumming as Boris Grishenko, Russian weapons research computer wiz.

footage, flew me to London for a screen test. I have no idea why they thought of me apart from the convenience of already being in one MGM/UA picture. But I knew I had the role of Xenia the moment I walked into the room. It was one of those classic cases. I could tell I was exactly what they were looking for. It was written all over their faces, despite them never having heard of me before or having seen my TV work."

Why Famke wanted to play the deadly Xenia is an easy question to answer. She laughed, "Money, success, fame...all those things and more! No seriously, I wanted to play a villain. I can't do housewife/girlfriend roles because of the way I look. They aren't an

option. I'm hoping Xenia opens up many opportunities for villainous roles so I can get out there and do something great."

Xenia's character kink in *GOLDENEYE* is the novel method by which she dispatches her victims. She kills them between her thighs during love-making, giving a whole new meaning to the phrase *coitus interruptus*! Noted Janssen, "There's not much more to the role than that either. That was my one fear when I accepted it. I'm trying to add more to what is your average look-fabulous-kill-people part. But it is a James Bond movie after all. The characters by definition have to be cartoon-like and a little plastic."

According to Scorupco,

"Maud Adams in *OCTOPUSSY* was the best Bond Girl in my opinion. She was Swedish and now I'm the first Polish one, although my home is in Sweden."

In *GOLDENEYE* Scorupco portrays Natalya Fyodorovna Simonova, a Russian computer operator working at a secret Space Weapons Research Center inside the Arctic Circle. When she witnesses the brutal slaughter of all her co-workers, Natalya goes on the run from the ruthless Janus Syndicate, the mafia masterminds behind a huge illegal weapons market, and forms an uneasy alliance with James Bond to expose their Achilles heel.

"I'm a modern Bond Girl," said Scorupco. "You won't catch me running around in high heels and a bikini. Although I would have agreed to do that just to be part of this enormous production."

Not that it matters, Scorupco wears only two outfits throughout the whole of *GOLDENEYE* and neither can be called particularly fancy, yet she leaves every male shaken and stirred the moment she walks onto the set. If there is such a thing as star charisma, Scorupco has it in spades.

How Scorupco landed in *GOLDENEYE* was pure accident. "I was in the right place at the right time," she said. "The producers came to Sweden as a last resort to cast the part. They had combed Russia and Yugoslavia to find Natalya and



Scorupco plays Natalya Fyodorovna Simonova, a Russian computer operator at a secret arctic outpost who teams up with Pierce Brosnan as the new 007.

ended up in desperation at a Swedish casting director's office. He showed them a tape of every Swedish actress and, because I was filming *PETRI TEARS* at the time, he had up-to-the-minute footage of me in action. Naturally, I was thrilled when they offered me the role."

Does Scorupco feel that playing a Bond Girl can be made "politically correct" for the '90s? "That whole question is such a stupid one," she replied. "It may be a Bond movie we're making, but that doesn't mean to say Natalya can't be strong, smart and streetwise. I don't think she's the sex symbol in *GOLDENEYE* anyway. Famke Janssen's Xenia is the seductress."

The main difference between *GOLDENEYE* and the other Bond movies is easy to pinpoint for Scorupco. "The story is less fantastic than usual," she said.

"Most Bonds are set in a fantasy world and nothing ever seemed real about them. But the *GOLDENEYE* story is possible and far more realistic. I am trying to give Natalya a level of reality that has been sorely lacking before."

What about Pierce Brosnan as James Bond? Is he any good? Was he the right choice for the part? "I was asking myself the same questions until two weeks ago when I watched the dailies for the first time," said Janssen. "My sister came to visit and the producers asked her if she would like to see any footage. So I joined her out of curiosity. Pierce really does come across well. I'm not just saying that because I have to toe the corporate interview line. I think Pierce will be the best Bond since Sean Connery. He has the same devilish air about him. I'm sure everyone will agree

DEADLY XENIA ONATOPP

"It is a James Bond movie after all," said Janssen. "The characters by definition have to be cartoon-like and a little plastic. I'm trying to add more than looking fabulous."

with me too."

Scorupco also gives Brosnan high marks. "Pierce Brosnan is working out very well," said Scorupco. "Sean Connery gave his Bond a dashing and debonair seriousness while Roger Moore played him more tongue-in-cheek. Timothy Dalton was far too Shakespearean for my taste. Pierce is trying both Sean and Roger's approaches at the same time, so it's a bit of a knife-edged performance. However, he's strong and funny with a neat macho streak and everyone seems delighted with what he's achieving. Bond fans are going to love him because he's giving the series back its 'Boy's Own Life' adventure feel."

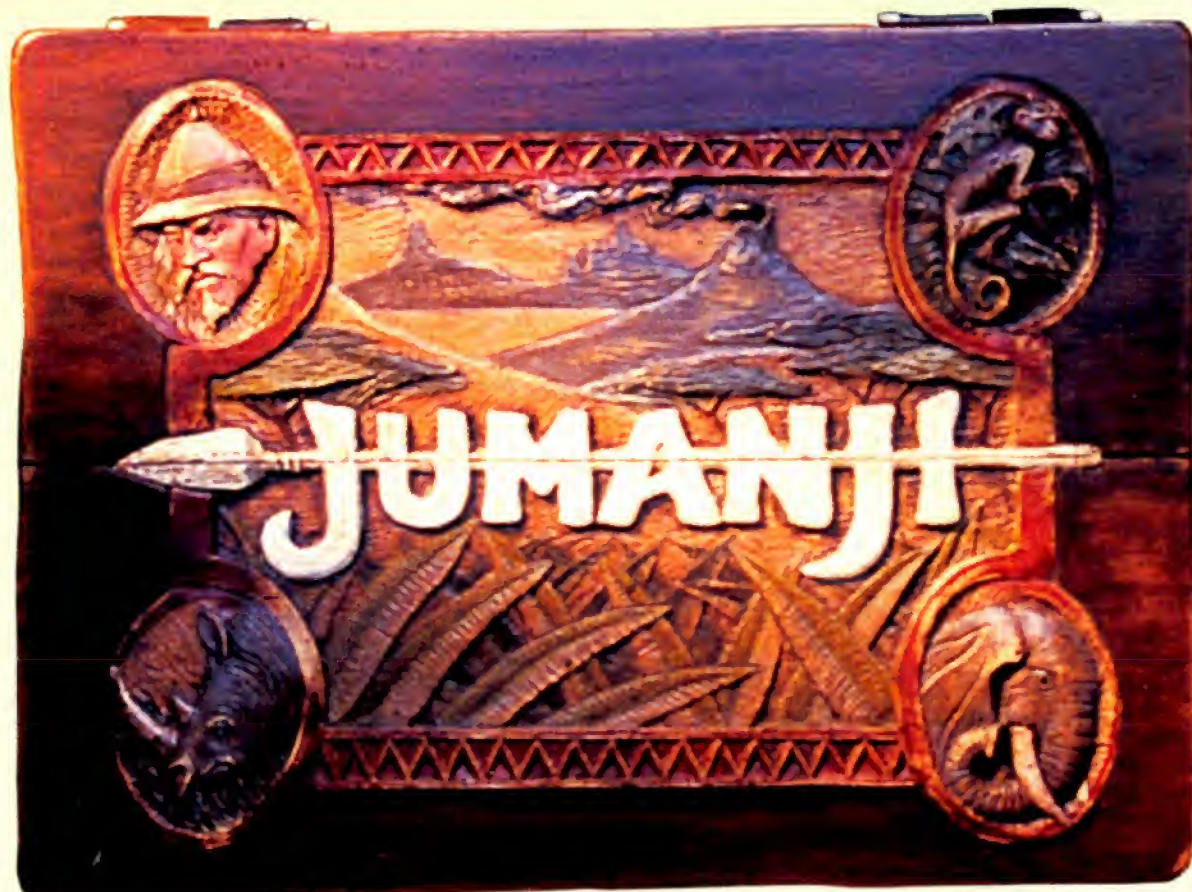
With regards to director Campbell, who cut his teeth on such action fare as *NO ESCAPE*, *CRIMINAL LAW* and *DEFENSELESS*, Famke said, "He's great with all the action sequences. Clearly that's why he was chosen. While that stuff is the greater part of any Bond movie, the director must also be able to work with the actors. Unfortunately there hasn't been much time to develop our characters here, discuss their motivation, or have a rehearsal period. But as much limited time as there is permitting, Martin has gone out of his way to work with us and give us some guidance. I've been staggered by the enormous amount of energy he seems to have as the schedule has been a crippling six-day/18-week one."

It's fair to say Izabella Scorupco has been bowled over by the whole *GOLDENEYE* experience. "The first couple of weeks were amazing," she said. "I was floating in a dream. I went from being staggered by the sheer enormity of the Bond production to becoming very spoiled by it. Coming from Swedish movies, where they have a \$1 million budget for an entire costume drama, and wit-

nessing the same amount being spent on one massive action scene, complete with exploding buildings, and in Puerto Rico, gave me a fabulous buzz. But the realization that I'm now a part of movie history has been the hardest part to cope with. Whether I'm good or bad, and audiences like me or not, I'm now forever tied into the James Bond legend. That's why I refuse to take any of it seriously. If I did I couldn't go out there and face the cameras." □

Sexy but deadly, Janssen as Xenia Onatopp, an assassin who kills with her thighs during lovemaking.





Robin Williams stars in Chris Van Allsburg's surreal fantasy.

Left: The movie game made of Van Allsburg's Caldecott Award-winning kid's book, opens from TriStar Pictures nationwide November 22.

By Dan Persons

The Sony Corporation seems to be nursing mixed expectations about the upcoming holiday season. On the electronics side, there's the hope that America's zeal for high-tech game systems will result in more than a few kids finding a supercharged PlayStation terminal under the tree come Christmas morning. Meanwhile, over at Sony-owned TriStar, they're paradoxically betting the farm that, for the next couple of months, whole families will want nothing better than to bundle on down to the local multiplex in order to spend a few hours watching two kids engage in the decidedly low-tech pastime of a board-game.

Well, not just any board-game. This one stems from the imagination of an award-winning children's writer, and is to Parcheesi what the invasion of Normandy was to Battleship. It's also a game that boasts amongst its main players a box-office superstar and a corps of technicians from the most renowned CGI outfit around. It is, in short, JUMANJI, the film adaptation of Chris Van Allsburg's Caldecott Award-win-



Williams stars as a boy who was trapped and grew to adulthood inside the magic African adventure boardgame of the title.

ning illustrated fantasy. Directed by HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS and THE ROCKE-TEER's Joe Johnston, starring Robin Williams, Bonnie Hunt, Kirsten Dunst, and Bradley Pierce, and offering special effects by Industrial Light and Magic, the film will check into theaters November 22, just in time to make the most of the upcoming, family-oriented season. With any luck (and a little skill

behind the camera), it will also hang around long enough to prove Mr. Van Allsburg's vivid fantasy a more potent source of film entertainment than the likes of SUPER MARIO BROTHERS or MORTAL KOMBAT.

Published in 1981, the book *Jumanji* captivated both parents and critics with its surreally raucous plot-line and its seductively realistic artwork about an African-themed board-game that conjures the jungle into hazardous reality as it is played by two bored children. Amongst those readers most enthused by the scenario were producers Scott Kroopf and William Teitler. Independent of each other, the two filmmakers realized that Van Allsburg's unique story held all the ingredients for a truly stand-out film project. Although Kroopf had approached the author in 1985 about adapting the book, it wasn't until three years later, while at Interscope, that he and Teitler joined forces and the project took off in earnest. A script was commissioned from writers Greg Taylor and Jim Strain, the initial draft opening up the basic plot-line in a way that satisfied

the producers' insistence that, though the scope of the story would obviously expand, the unique flavor of Van Allsburg's vision would be maintained.

"It's been a slow path," explained Kroopf of the process that brought JUMANJI to the screen. "Chris' books, when you look at them, offer images that you could probably base a whole movie on. But it's tricky: you have to find some sort of hinge point, something that takes it beyond some kind of simple fable. That's why we picked JUMANJI: it had a beginning, a middle, and an end; it had the story of finding the game, playing it and having the consequences of this game—animals, jungle, the various perils—come into your world. That's the charm of Chris' work, that surrealism where you see a rhinoceros charging through a house. The story had a hinge point: it's a story about a game that's magical, and a game that, once it's started, it must be finished."

Taylor and Strain opened up Van Allsburg's story by adding adults to the mix of game-players. Bonnie Hunt is played as a child by Laura Bell-Bundy, shown being attacked by bats on her first roll, and seeing Robin Williams' character,



“It goes beyond some simple fable,” said producer Scott Kroopf. “It’s about a game that’s magical, and once it’s started, it must be finished.”

capable, but it freaked him out... a lot.’ The humor of that felt like something that could really enrich the story, and it felt like a more human action hero, a more realistic action hero, someone who might have a reaction more like yours or mine. We were thrilled when [Williams accepted the part].”

Principal photography started last November and continued through to this past April. “This has got quite a scope to it,” Kroopf explained. “We had to shoot Keene, New Hampshire—the town in

in mind when he came up with the story and set it in a New England setting.”

When the shoot moved indoors to Vancouver, it was not to the tidy, middle-class household of the book, but a mammoth, four-story mansion that is gradually engulfed in foliage as Williams, Hunt, and child leads Kirsten Dunst (INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE) and Bradley Pierce (the voice of Chip in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST) are compelled to finish the game. Main photography took place at the Bridge Studios, while additional sets needed for a pivotal monsoon sequence were built at the water tanks of the British Columbian Research Institute. Although the actors had their hands full contending with clinging vines and torrential rains (albeit with heated water), Johnston and company also had their work cut out for them: orchestrating not only the steady devolution of a stately mansion into a primordial forest, but also making sure that everything would accommodate the creatures spun both as CGI elements from ILM (including a herd of rhinoceri in full, stampede mode), and as animatronic performers from Alec Gillis and Tom Woodruff Jr.’s Amalgamated Dynamics Incorporated (key among them a lion designed to match its CGI counterpart, and an alligator that Williams wrestles in a life-or-death grudge match).

“I did TERMINAL VELOCITY recently,” said Kroopf, “which was a big show. This is twice as big as that. It’s an enormous amount of visual effects, it’s an enormously complicated show. There are big sets, flooding of sets. We had to make the animals come alive and quite a few techniques were utilized in the process. The scope of the show was epic, to say the least; basically, a house turns

Williams makes a great escape as the game’s jungle encroaches on the house. Inset: Crocodile attack courtesy Amalgamated Dynamics.



played as a child by Adam Hann-Byrd, disappear into the game entirely. Williams gets reunited with Hunt as an adult 25 years later when she has the courage to pick up the game once again with her children.

“It seemed to us a great piece of invention off of the logic of the game as presented in Chris’ book,” said Kroopf. “It was also an opportunity to have the cast include an adult character who had lost his childhood living inside a board-game. The concept of that alone, on top of a board-game that invades your world, really got us going.”

With the film’s structure now firmly in place (subsequent drafts were submitted by both Van Allsburg and Jonathan Hensleigh; final credit has not been determined), it was time to line up the money. The project ultimately landed at the Guber-Peters Company, where it was eventually folded into TriStar Pictures when Peter Guber and Jon Peters took over operations at corporate sibling Columbia Pictures. There JUMANJI remained, mostly in limbo, until the participation of Joe Johnston and the potential clout of Robin Williams reactivated the project.

According to Kroopf, they always had Williams in mind during the decade-long gestation period.

Noted Kroopf, “When Chris and Bill and I got together and talked about what this character of Alex Parrish would be like, there was an obvious way to go, which is that he’s an action hero, he comes out of the game and he’s like Tarzan or something like that. We kept talking about it and thinking, *You know, it’s not really in the spirit of the book, it’s not really surprising.* And in talking about what he could be like, we just said, ‘Well, what if he was like Robin Williams? Someone who, instead of becoming the he-man, learned how to survive, became

which it all takes place [standing in for the film’s fictional town of Brantford]—in both late fall/going into winter, which is why we shot in November; and we wanted to wait and get it in full bloom with green trees and all that, so we had to wait until early June to come back and shoot three days which are part of the beginning of the movie. We wanted it to look different from the way we see the movie during most of the story, which is this late fall/wintry look. The thing that we liked about that was the juxtaposition of [the bleak New England weather] against these wild, tropical, strange animals. It just felt very much in that surrealistic spirit of what Chris had

The pandemonium of the game escapes into the town. What ILM did for stampeding dinosaurs in JURASSIC PARK, it does for CGI rhinos and elephants in JUMANJI.





BOOK TO FILM

Expanding Van Allsburg to Hollywood's size.

By Dan Persons

Call it the house where childhood lives: the grand structures we've been seeing in family films of late, dwellings big enough to justify major budgets and elaborate plotlines. In *CASPER*, it was a gothic fun-house complete with its own theme-park ride and mad-scientist lab. In *THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD*, it was a middle-class, New York City townhouse—an oxymoron if ever one existed. In *JUMANJI*, TriStar's entry in the upcoming holiday season sweepstakes, it is the home of Sam Parrish, a former shoe magnate who has fallen upon hard times. The building, with its impressive, central staircase, complicated roof-line and myriad rooms, not only succeeds in physicalizing the notion of a family that can trace its roots back generations (if that doesn't convince you, the statue of General Angus Parrish in the Brantford, New Hampshire town square will), it also limns the expansion in scale between Chris Van Allsburg's Caldecott award-winning children's book, and the big-budget film it has become.

In its original incarnation, Van Allsburg's *Jumanji* played as a sort of surrealist's *Cat In The Hat*: bored siblings bring anarchy upon their tidy, middle-class home via the introduction of an enchanted medium—in *Jumanji*'s case an enchanted board

game that materializes the hazards of the jungle into full, snarling life. Where Van Allsburg departs from Seuss is in his abandonment of line-drawn whimsy in favor of a richer and more realistic artist's eye. We don't see much of Judy and Peter's (no last name) home in *Jumanji*'s 28 pages—the structure exists in details only: an overstuffed armchair here; a fireplace (upon which a python coils menacingly) there; a kitchen whose orderliness is subverted by a pack of marauding monkeys. Still, what we do see gives the impression of simple comfort: a home, if not quite suburban (Van Allsburg's lush drawings suggest a more classic era than post-Baby-Boom America), then at least no more elaborate than a modest, two-story structure.

By necessity, that simplicity of scale has been abandoned for *JUMANJI*, the movie. In both

In the game's early stages, monkeys in the kitchen begin to take over the house, Allsburg's surrealist vision brought to life with CGI effects magic of ILM.



Williams gets attacked by a giant bird, one of the sequences added to the script to flesh out the book, which Allsburg adapted himself.



Van Allsburg's script—based upon Greg Taylor and Jim Strain's original concept—and a subsequent, and considerably rewritten one by Jonathan Hensleigh, middle-class modesty has been replaced with big-screen grandeur. That change is characterized by a house that, while admittedly too big for the widowed mother Nora Shepherd (who would become Aunt Nora by the time principal photography started) and her two children, Judy and Peter, is certainly large enough to contain monsoons, quicksand pits and a stampede that—in hyperbolic fantasy style—incorporates half the species of Africa. In similar fashion, the storyline itself has undergone an expansion of scope, providing the filmmakers with a flashback that ex-

plains how young Alan Parrish—played initially by Adam Hann-Byrd—can disappear into the game in 1969 and reemerge as Robin Williams in 1995, while also allowing them to expand the consequences of the game beyond the confines of the Parrish homestead and into the entire town.

The larger palette also means a larger cast of characters. While the book could satisfy itself with depicting only the two children (if even that: following the inspiration of master surrealist, Rene Magritte—whom Van Allsburg quotes from directly at several points—the author/artist was able to conjure beautifully oblique images that catch the children. For instance, halfway out the door as they rush to return the game to the spot where it was found), the movie is obligated to think in larger terms. It's in this aspect that the differences between the Van Allsburg and Hensleigh drafts become most noticeable.

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into a jungle.

Kroopf started in the business producing *BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE* for \$9 million. He credited that low-budget experience and the team he assembled with Teitler and Johnston for keeping the big-budget *JUMANJI* on track. Kroopf singled out executive producer Larry Franco, production designer, cinematographer Tom Ackerman and ILM. "As big a film as this is, it has never had a moment when it felt out of hand," said Kroopf. "I think we assembled a team that thought things through so well that, strange to say in this day and age, this has been going absolutely on budget and on time, and I have no anticipation, based on what I've seen, that we are going to go that far off."

Such smooth sailing can only be good news for TriStar, a division that, rumor says, teeters on the verge of absorption by big brother Columbia unless something very big breaks very soon. Did any of the anxiety currently being felt by the upper echelons translate down to the sound stage? "This is their Christmas movie, they have high hopes for it," Kroopf replied. "I don't think they've been too desperate. One thing is that we got Robin to do this film, which is a terrific kind of coup, in terms of getting someone who can bring as much as he can bring to a project like this. Often times you get these big fantasy movies that don't have very big casting. Once [Williams signed on], I felt it gave them a lot of confidence, and rightfully so.

The surreal imagery of author and illustrator Van Allsburg's slim 1981 children's book is meticulously recreated on a Hollywood scale.



"The obvious approach would have the character come out of the game and be like Tarzan, an action hero," said Kroopf. "We were thrilled to get Robin."



Not your nuclear family: Bonnie Hunt as the spinster traumatized by playmate Robin Williams's disappearance in the game, as children, and Bradley Pierce and Kirsten Dunst as the neighbor kids who find the game and play it again.

"You always have the feeling a story like this should be a pretty good ride, action-wise and visually. But for it to be really funny and really moving, you really need to have fantastic actors. When I look at the group I've got, a lot of it is that when you get Robin Williams in a movie, everyone wants to be in your movie, which is great. Kirsten Dunst, although she hasn't done very much work, does such flawless work that I was excited to get her. And then

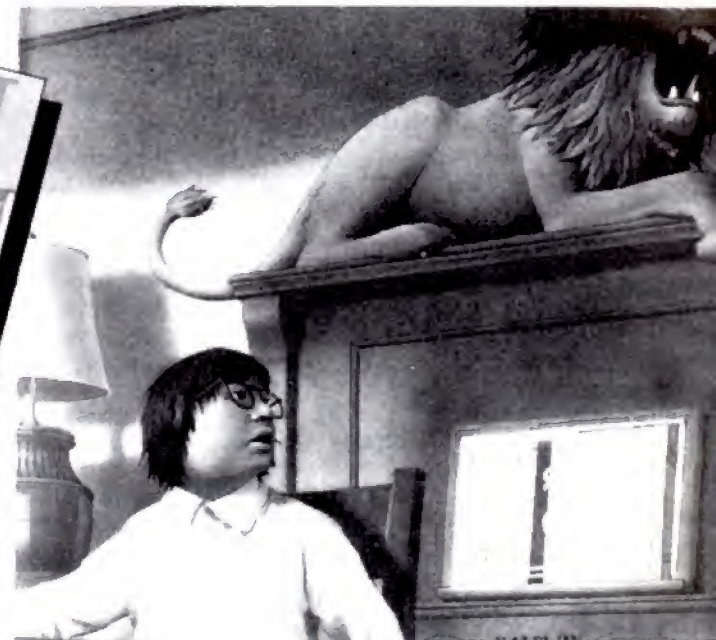
when we got Bonnie Hunt and Bebe Neuwirth [as guardian Aunt Nora] and David Alan Grier [Officer Bentley] and Jonathan Hyde [big-game hunter Van Pelt], they're all really good and they're all very funny people. They're all gifted comedians who have the ability to also portray real characters. So what happened is the story got spiced with humor, but the greatest thing about Robin is that he's always been very, very funny, but there are so many

movies in which he's also incredibly moving."

The big question is: can a property that started life as a widely regarded kid's book escape its pigeonhole and draw the wider, family demographic needed to make a big-budget production pay off? As far as Kroopf's concerned, it's not an issue: "It goes right back to Chris Van Allsburg. One of the funny things about his material is that, yeah, you can read these books to kids or kids can read them, but I've seldom seen adults—because of the style in which he does things—not really take some interest in the way he tells his story. The other thing is that we very carefully thought, *How can we make this more than a story about two kids playing a game?* When we came up with the notion of it being about two kids and two adults playing the game, it felt like now it really has something for everyone, in terms of [the viewer] imagining it happening to him.

"One of the things that appeals to me most about this is that in most fantasy movies you go into a fantasy world, or sometimes a fantasy character comes into your world. But herds of animals and marauding bands of monkeys and things like that, you read that in stories, but I haven't seen it that often in movies. That's the thing—combined with the fact that you have Robin as a kind of Robinson Crusoe stranded in this demented boardgame—that will make this an appealing story." □

Van Allsburg's original story featured only a boy and girl at the mercy of the game's magic, with adult characters added for the movie.



A VAMPIRE

Eddie Murphy and Angela Bassett don

By Dan Persons

The Paramount brass must be kicking themselves. Not long ago, they went ahead and sold their FRIDAY THE 13TH franchise to New Line, seemingly blind to the fact that 1995 was going to offer up the ultimate marketing gimmick: a Friday the thirteenth that just so happened to fall in October, the spookiest month of the year. Maybe that goes some way towards explaining why the studio was more than willing to take up comedian/actor Eddie Murphy, and his brother Charles, on their script for A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN. Maybe that's why they assented to the star's insistence that the film be directed by horror-master Wes Craven (who, in a weird example of synchronicity, also created Jason's soon-to-be-battlemate, Freddy Krueger).

Starring Murphy, along with Angela Bassett (MALCOLM X), Kadeem Hardison (A DIFFERENT WORLD, PANTHER), and John Witherspoon (A FAR-OFF PLACE, as well as Murphy-starrer BOOMERANG), VAMPIRE is more than just an attempt to make some ready cash off the trick-or-treat trade. For Craven—whose hybrid docu-horror film, THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW, so impressed Murphy that the actor sought him out for VAMPIRE—the film presented an opportunity stretch his range, moving from surreal dark fantasy into the realm of horror-tinged comedy.

"It's fast-paced," explained the director. "It's very, very comedic, which is one of the things that really attracted me to it, because I wanted to do something a little bit away from straight scaring people. For Eddie, it was just the opposite: he wanted to do something that was scary. So we combined our talents in two different fields and came up with this collaboration. We had a lot of fun."

With a script subsequently re-worked by Craven collaborators Chris Parker and

"It's very comedic," said Craven, "which is what attracted me to it. Eddie wanted to do something that was scary. We combined our talents and we had a lot of fun."



Eddie Murphy, in full vampire regalia, takes direction from Wes Craven. Paramount opens the comic monsterfest for Halloween on October 27.

Michael Lucker, VAMPIRE features Murphy as Maximilian, a Caribbean undead who seeks the aid of police officer Bassett in what literally turns out to be a life-or-death mission. Said Craven, "He is from the Bermuda Triangle, the sole survivor of a group that, in the vampire diaspora, went down through Africa and found an isolated, beautiful island in the Bermuda triangle and have lived there for centuries. They were hunted out by vampire hunters and killed off, and Eddie is the only one who manages to escape, he's the sole survivor of his tribe. He must find another vampire to mate with by the next full moon or he will die. There's lore that [a vampire] sired a daughter [Bassett] who is living in New York, so he comes to find her in this quest to save his own life."

Beyond the move into comedy, VAMPIRE represented another break for Craven: a genuine star vehicle shot under the aus-

pices of a major studio. Featuring such elaborate set-pieces as an opening harbor collision sequence (shot with ships obtained from the confiscation rolls of the Coast Guard), the film demanded the kind of a budget rarely provided to filmmaker's working in Craven's customary neck of the woods. But, although Paramount was relatively generous in what they accorded the filmmaker, the magnanimity stopped when it came to allowing VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN time in the famed borough itself. Logging only a few days of location work, Craven had to satisfy himself with recreating the rest of the feature's New York locales on the Paramount back-lot and on the streets of L.A.

The reason, Craven explained, was money: "I really can't blame Paramount for being cautious about how much they were going to spend on this. This isn't BEVERLY HILLS COP; it's a mix of comedy, romance, and horror starring a largely African-American cast and being directed by

someone perceived as a horror director. It was a risk, but it was a risk that Eddie was dying to take and a risk that I wanted to take. I got a chance to do comedy and do a love story with terrific actors. And Eddie was ready to try something new. I think he was tired of doing BEVERLY HILLS COP over and over again. For both of us it was a risk we were happy to take, but for Paramount it was not something they had full confidence in. In comparison to films I've done, it was a pretty good bank-roll. Obviously, when you're shooting an Eddie Murphy picture you're not going to use a non-union crew."

Not that the boost to the majors was always an easy transition. "This was a big, studio movie, and an Eddie Murphy movie," noted Howard Berger, the makeup artist whose KNB effects house also worked on such previous Craven efforts as THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS and

IN BROOKLYN

fangs for horror director Wes Craven.

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE. "Everybody was a little tense. Occasionally, committee decisions were made—not pertaining to us, of course, but other things, the way scenes were played and like that. It sort of tortured Wes, you know: make a decision, and that's it. Wes had to play the studio game a little bit. It was fun, but it's different. On *THE NEW NIGHTMARE*, it was just Marianne [Maddalena, *NIGHTMARE*'s producer and *VAMPIRE*'s executive producer] and Wes; I just had to deal with those two people, go to them with decisions. I didn't have to compete with anyone else. On this show, Eddie had his whole line of producers and then Wes had his producers, so it was like playing in both camps."

Rick Baker had been scheduled to do Murphy's makeup, but conflicts with *BATMAN RETURNS*, as well as involvement with Murphy's other genre project, *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR*, saw Baker voluntarily yielding makeup chores to KNB. Brought into the production a scant three weeks before the start of principal photography, Berger and his colleagues Bob Kurtzman and Dave Anderson (the latter recruited to apply Murphy's makeup), were forced to move quickly. Murphy's makeups were developed on plaster casts prepared by Baker for *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR* and were largely brought before the camera without the benefit of preliminary testing. While both Bassett and Hardison got their turn under the latex, the most elaborate work was done on the comedian's familiar visage.

"He goes through four stages of vampirism," noted Berger. "The first is just eyes and teeth, the second stage is kind of a *LOST BOYS* forehead piece, and the eyes and teeth. Third stage is a full, head appliance, which really changed his features. Fourth stage, which you see at the end of the picture, is this big monster-creature, which was an upper torso appliance and full head. It was kind of *LEGENDesque*; no horns or anything, but an exaggerated bone structure, big, monster teeth.



Secretly he longs to be Boris Karloff: Murphy in heavy makeup prosthetics designed by the KNB Efx Group, baring his fangs.

"Then Eddie plays two characters that are unrelated to vampirism: this guy named Guido, who's this white, Italian guy, this thug—he transforms into him to get into the police station. And then there's Preacher Pauley, who's kind of an Al Sharpton: real heavy-set. We did a fat-suit, worn under clothing, and big, fat makeup and a kind of pompadour hairstyle—all hairspray—and all that fun stuff."

While the Guido makeup was proclaimed the shoot's most difficult—requiring a three-hour stint in the makeup chair, coloring that went all the way to the eyelid, and green contact lenses—the preacher provided its own complications, most specifically in its requirement that test tapes be borrowed from the Baker shop in order to be sure that Pauley's look did not overlap with Baker's work on *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR*'s similarly obese protagonist.

According to Craven, audiences attending test screenings have been caught somewhat off-guard by the new Eddie Murphy, but have been gradually coming to terms with a side of the actor they have rarely seen. "He's very different," said Craven. "He's sort of street-smart in a way, but he's not urban, he has a very interesting sort of Caribbean accent and he plays it in a very courtly manner. He's wry and very knowledgeable, but he's learning about Brooklyn as he experiences it. It's kind of a funny, fish-out-of-water story, but in a way, he plays a straight character. The character is really not shucking-and-jiving, Eddie is not doing his characteristic laugh at all. He plays a serious villain that's really a force to be reckoned with."

Craven, of course, knows something about forces to be reckoned with, having, in *WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE*, thrown down the gauntlet for other filmmakers by declaring his own beliefs about the function of horror in modern society. But does a high-profile, and clearly commercial, concept such as *A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN* slot comfortably into Craven's notion of the horror film as modern-day fable?

"I think it does, in the overall sense that this does have something to say to the audience," Craven replied. "It's about the exposure that love brings, and how there are certain people who get very fat and powerful on exploiting and using people, and that the choice to go to that side is a very powerful temptation. Angela Bassett's character, Rita, is sorely tempted to go to her vampire side. In a larger sense, we're talking about how you live your life, whether you live it for number one, or whether, in a sense, you make yourself vulnerable to other people and not place your interests first every time. It becomes an excruciating decision for her to make by the end of the picture.

"That's the best that I think horror can do, to deal with these kinds of life-and-death issues, issues of the soul, if you will, and the conscience, but to use the ancient symbols in a way that's entertaining to the audience." □

Clive Barker's

HELLRAISER IV BLOODLINE

Franchise fine tuning by Miramax led to rewriting, reshooting and rescheduling.

By Michael Beeler

"Originally our release date, which was always sort of a joke, was January, 1995," said Kevin Yagher, the director of HELLRAISER IV: BLOODLINE. Miramax opens the hotly anticipated sequel nationwide November 4. "I delivered my director's cut at the end of December of last year, right before Christmas. And, then we reworked it into March. It was a huge undertaking, an \$8 million movie trying to be made for four and ending up around five." Which incidentally is about what Clive Barker, the best-selling British horror novelist and painter, turned director and producer, ended up spending to produce the original HELLRAISER in 1987.

Miramax's production of Barker's franchise series has been caught in a lengthy process of editing, rewrites, subsequent filming and postponement of release dates. The numerous setbacks have caused most of the creative elements of this latest Pin Head saga to drop out of the production as they needed to move on to other scheduled projects.

The almost epic storyline, conceived by Barker and scripted by his life long pal Pete Atkins, follows the Lament Configuration puzzle box from its creation in the 18th century through the 20th century and then to its final resting place on an asteroid in the 22nd Century. And although the problem of how best to present that story has been at the center of the delays, lack of money and



Makeup designer-turned-director Kevin Yagher rehearses Valentina Vargas as the 18th century Angellique. Miramax opens the film nationwide November 4.

time during principal photography seems to be germane to this film's post-production hell.

"I've been on my own movie," explained executive producer Barker, who has also been busy with a noisy remodeling of his home. "I've been dealing with LORD OF ILLUSIONS. So, I haven't really had that close of dealings with them on any of this stuff. And I sometimes feel that [Miramax] just feeds me this stuff when it's useful for them to do that and they keep me out when they don't need me. So, I have a very remote relationship on this one. But I can say that it's definitely been the most troubled of the four [HELLRAISER] pictures. Very much so.

"And I think part of the reason for that is that the first estimations about how long it would take and how much it would cost

were hopelessly optimistic. I'm talking about the very first shoot now, way back when I was shooting LORD OF ILLUSIONS. They were in cuckoo land believing they could achieve all that needed to be achieved within the financial framework that they had laid down. It just was not possible. It wasn't practical. And the consequence was, and I said this plenty to Miramax, I said, 'You're closing down this movie with three weeks of shooting still to be done.'

Initial in-house screenings resulted in Miramax, whose motivation as a production house is creating stylized as well as profitable movies, wanting to go back and rework

the presentation of the storyline that they had earlier approved. "When [Miramax] looked at it, their gut reaction was that it wasn't what they wanted after all," said Yagher, who eventually had to leave the film to begin production on SLEEPY HOLLOW, a film he is directing for Paramount Pictures and which is being produced by Scott Rudin (ADDAMS FAMILY). "I made the film they thought they wanted me to make but they realized after it was put together that [Pin Head] was not in the film fast enough and in a sense I don't disagree with that. It's like having a Freddy Krueger movie without Freddy in it."

Atkins, who actually wrote the screenplays for all three of the HELLRAISER sequels concurred, noting, "I'd written six versions of this script: six drafts. And [Mi-

ramax] always knew that the 18th century came first and Pin Head didn't appear until the 20th century story. So, it's not that anybody could blame Kevin for delaying Pin Head's entrance because that's the way it was written, that's the way it was approved by Miramax.

"But, I think that when they saw the movie they suddenly felt, 'Hey, wait a minute, where's our monster. We made a terrible mistake!' They didn't finger point. They didn't say, 'Oh, it's Pete's fault or it's Kevin's fault!' They just figured, 'We should have known this originally. We should have brought Pin Head in earlier.'"

The changes that Miramax wanted were not simply reshoots but actually required subsequent altering of the script and new additional filming. Their feeling was rather than open the film in the 18th century and then present the story in chronological order, that they would begin in the contemporary time frame and tell the 18th century story using flashbacks. "Making the changes they wanted were tough because of the three time periods," said Yagher, who actually replaced Stuart Gordon (REANIMATOR, FORTRESS) as director. "Everything was so tight in that script. To do something different was a major change. Even to take something in the first act and put it in the second is a major change. You're messing with the whole thing. And you can't go back unless you use flash backs and that's always a little dangerous.

"The time traveling thing makes it a bit easier but it's still difficult. I could understand the changes they wanted to make but for somebody who has slept with it, which they didn't do, it's tough to give up what you've kind of created. I had given everything to the one script. So, the bottom line was I had to decide to either basically dedicate another year to the film or go on with my life and continue with other projects. In the end, it wasn't so much that I was upset with the direction that they wanted to take, as it was that I just didn't have the time and energy."

So Yagher left to join SLEEPY HOLLOW, which was already heavily into pre-production. Atkins went on to rewrite three scenes, which were filmed by Joe Chappelle (HALLOWEEN 6), using principal actors Valentina Vargas, Bruce Ramsey and Doug Bradley, who has portrayed Pin Head in all four of the HELLRAISER films. Eventually Miramax wanted those additional scenes



Doug Bradley returns as Pin Head, leader of the Cenobites, a presence since the original in 1987. Inset: Vargas as Angelleque-turned-Cenobite vixen.



to be rewritten again and reshot again. But by this time Atkins was too busy co-writing a script called INVASION EARTH with Tony Hickox (WAXWORKS I and II). On Barker's recommendation, Miramax hired Rand Ravich who co-wrote with Mark Kruger the screenplay of CANDYMAN 2: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH and he rewrote the three scenes, which Chappelle then reshot.

"It was less painful for me to walk away, then to sit there and watch it day to day," admitted Yagher. "Then I could just see the final thing and say, 'Well, they did

this and they did that to it.' But I didn't have to see every step. It's like pulling butt hairs out [Yagher laughed]. Every day they pluck just one! I would rather they just yanked them all out at once! That's my attitude."

Barker, who had his share of production problems on RAW-HEAD REX, UNDER-WORLD and NIGHTBREED, is no stranger to the politics of movie making. "Given the number of variables there are, the number of things that can go wrong, it's a wonder that any good movies are made at all," said Barker, whose animated version of THE THIEF OF ALWAYS is set for release in late 1996. "If you go on movie sets constantly, you see the tension, you see the dramas, you see the financial stuff, the inter-personal stuff, the bad politics or whatever else there is. So, it's not surprising nor should we be surprised that so many very conventional, very predictable, very repetitive things get to the screen because many people say, producers say, 'I don't want to take a risk with this. If I'm going to invest my money I would prefer to risk it on something that has been done before, which audiences have responded to 20 times before and that way I don't have to worry.'

"But, when the reviews come out nobody ever criticizes the producer. If a movie looks like shit or has been hurried up down the line or there have been compromises made in the shooting or the casting or the effects, nobody ever turns around and says, 'Well you know this movie was produced by X.' So, it's always the director or the writer, or both who gets it in the neck. Often the writer and the director are cogs in a much larger and sometimes very cruel machine."

Atkins, whose next novel, *Big Thunder* (a book that starts off as a ghost story and then becomes something stranger) is due out in 1996, summed it all up nicely by simply stating, "I'm not sure about all of the changes that were made. Obviously I'm biased but I liked my original structure, as did Kevin and also Clive. But, Miramax is paying for the movie so..."

So, as the old saying goes, you run it up the flag pole and see who salutes. Welcome to Hollywood. □



Sheriff Woody and Buzz Lightyear, the toy stars of TOY STORY, bringing the dimensional realism of puppet animation into the computer age of Bay Area Pixar's high tech storytelling digital know-how.

TOY STORY

Walt Disney and Pixar team up to launch the first computer-animated movie.

By Lawrence French

When Walt Disney released his first animated feature, *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS*, in 1937, it was the culmination of a dream that grew out of economic necessities. At the time, the cartoon shorts Disney was producing couldn't generate sufficient income to realize his ultimate goals. Some 50 years later, Pixar, a small computer animation company, located in Pt. Richmond, California, across the bay from San Francisco, found itself in a similar position. Like Walt Disney in the early '30s, Pixar had produced a series of ground breaking short cartoons, that reached a pinnacle in 1988, when Disney's *TIN TOY* became the first computer-animated film to ever receive an Academy Award. Pixar's short films featured life-like 3-D characters and objects that could be viewed from all sides. In traditional hand-drawn animation, the characters are flat and lack the dimensionality made possible by computer graphics.

TIN TOY, Pixar's penultimate short, introduced their most recognized character: "Tinny," a wind-up toy musician. (In the film, Tinny encounters a rambunctious baby, which causes him to flee in terror from the towering tyke). In 1989, faced with the financially limiting prospect of producing only shorts, the management at Pixar decided to gear up towards the goal of eventually producing a feature film. *TOY STORY*, Pixar's first feature, opens nationwide November 22, a coproduction with Walt Disney Productions.

John Lasseter, the director of Pixar's short films, as well as *TOY STORY*, recalls



At Pixar, animation scientist Elliot Smyrl works on shading a sequence of Buzz and Woody at his Silicon Graphics workstation, computer 'toons.

the genesis of the project: "When we had finished our last short film, *KNICK-KNACK*, we wanted to make a feature, so we asked ourselves, 'What are the necessary steps to get there?' At the time we were just a small seven-person animation team, so we needed to get more production experience. For that we started making TV commercials, and our staff grew to about 24 people.

"The next step, was to prove to a studio that we could do long form computer animation. We had come up with an idea for a half-hour Christmas special, using Tinny from *TIN TOY*, but the networks pay very little money for specials, so it wasn't economically feasible for us to make it."

At that point, Disney approached Pixar



TOY STORY

RENDERMAN

Dr. Edwin E. Catmull on his CGI 'toon innovation.

By Lawrence French

Twenty years ago, Ed Catmull began his pioneering research into computer graphics at the New York Institute of Technology, working out of a converted two-story garage, amid the posh estates of Westbury, Long Island. While there, his work caught the attention of George Lucas, who brought Catmull, along with his associates Alvy Ray Smith, David DiFrancesco and Ralph Guggenheim to Lucasfilm. Then, after a scant six years at Lucasfilm, Catmull and his colleagues branched off to form Pixar, hoping to eventually make a feature film.

"George was a pioneer because he funded the early research, but even he didn't realize where we were headed," said Catmull. "One of the weaknesses at Lucasfilm was that we weren't intimately tied into production. Unless the tools we developed were honed and perfected, they wouldn't be trusted to actual production. That was one of the big differences between George [Lucas] and Disney. In 1986, when we began developing CAPS [the Computer Animated Paint System] with Disney, they committed themselves to the software, even though the whole process wasn't working. *THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER* was the first film to use it entirely, and it was a little scary, but in the end we made it work."

While at Lucasfilm, Catmull

Buzz takes off: Catmull was a key developer of Pixar's RenderMan software, the industry standard that introduced motion blur realism.



TOY STORY's T-Rex: the CGI revolution wrought by Catmull and Pixar with the development of RenderMan led to the effects triumph of JURASSIC PARK.

began to work on the problems inherent in making computer graphics believable for feature films. "We were faced with several problems," explained Catmull. "One of them was that we had to be able to render scenes with motion blur. If we didn't have that, we couldn't be used in feature films. We also realized we'd have to be able to render extraordinarily complex environments. So Rob Cook, Loren Carpenter and I sat down and rethought the whole rendering process. We said, 'Let's design as if we had 80 million polygons to deal with, which, at the time, was far in excess of what anyone was thinking about.'"

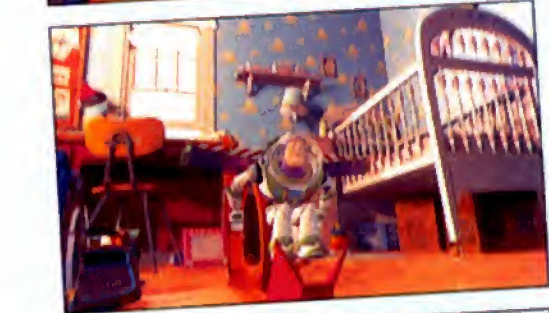
Out of that came the initial development of Pixar's RenderMan software, which has gone on to become an industry standard, as well as winning a technical achievement Academy Award. RenderMan allowed for the realistic creation of images, by describing lights, cameras, scenes and objects to the computer, which in turn could generate film quality images. "We first used it to create motion blur in a still picture Tom Porter did of moving pool balls," related Catmull. "Then it was used in our first short film, *ANDRE AND WALLY B.*, and for the first time in a feature on *YOUNG*

SHERLOCK HOLMES."

When Pixar became an independent company, they quickly embarked on a series of short films, beginning with *LUXO, JR.* in 1986, which allowed them to refine and develop their RenderMan software, as each successive short film got more complex. RenderMan was also used extensively at ILM, where it helped create the water tentacle in *THE ABYSS* and the dinosaurs in *JURASSIC PARK*. "Without RenderMan *JURASSIC PARK* would have looked like a Harryhausen film," said Catmull. "Harryhausen did a great job animating, but his dinosaurs strobed, because they didn't have any motion-blur."

Earlier this year, when Steven Spielberg announced an alliance between his DreamWorks studio and Silicon Graphics Inc. (SGI) to make animated features, he praised them highly, saying, "We couldn't have done *JURASSIC PARK* without Silicon Graphics."

Reacting to that statement, Ed Catmull said, "It was more a case of the whole industry growing up together. Films like *JURASSIC PARK* and *TERMINATOR 2* resulted from a whole series of things coming together. There had to be interactive graphics, which SGI is



ANIMATION SYNERGY

“George Lucas was a pioneer because he funded the early research,” said Catmull. “But even he didn’t realize where we were headed. That was different at Disney.”

very good at, as well as low-cost computing, and motion-blur. Steven doesn’t really know, because for him, it was just whatever it took to get JURASSIC PARK made. Now Steven is jumping on the bandwagon, but the fact is, he didn’t understand this [technology] at all. What he’s saying now is just a lot of marketing crap. It was actually James Cameron who understood that CGI was more than just special effects. George [Lucas] and ILM deserve a lot of credit, but even George didn’t quite get it, or he wouldn’t have let us go.”

With the explosion in CGI, artists and technicians are going to be in ever growing demand, a prospect that doesn’t phase Catmull, although DreamWorks has already begun arduously courting animators from Disney and other studios. “DreamWorks is trying to build a base, so they’re going to raid everybody they can,” said Catmull. “There’s only so much talent out there. They’ve already tried to hire some of our people away. They’ve offered more money, but nobody’s gone. This is a place where the technical people and the artists are peers.

Renderman: Catmull, Pixar’s chief technology officer, executive vice president and executive producer.



In most other places, you have one working over the other. Consequently, people like working here, and if they’re happy, that’s the best way to keep them from leaving.”

Jeffrey Katzenberg, the head of DreamWorks animation division, has announced their first animated film, PRINCE OF EGYPT will be ready in late 1998. The impending competition doesn’t concern Catmull. “I keep reading all the announcements about what Jeffrey is going to do, and they call their company DreamWorks,” remarked Catmull. “Well, we’re actually doing it, so we’re thinking of changing our name to RealityWorks!”

With ten years of experience already behind Pixar, DreamWorks may have a lot of catching up to do. “They’re starting from scratch,” said Catmull, “so we’re already far cheaper than whatever it will cost Jeffrey to make films. Meanwhile, traditional 2-D animation is at its peak right now, so what’s DreamWorks going to do that’s any better than Disney? In the whole animation process, there isn’t any obvious way to make it faster, cheaper, or better. They think he’s going to come up with a better system than Disney, but they’re not!”

Although Pixar is now in the forefront of computer animation, it won’t be long before other studios follow in their footsteps. Pre-production is already underway on Pixar’s second feature which will also be directed by John Lasseter. “We’re the only company to have done a CGI feature film,” noted Catmull, “and we know what to do to take the next step forward. Other companies will be doing production, and at some point they may catch up, but right now we’re way ahead of everyone else. If we’re lucky, maybe we can keep the lead forever.” □



Director John Lasseter in his office at Pixar, surrounded by some of the childhood toys that served as inspiration for bringing the film’s toys to life.

about the possibility of doing a CGI animated film. “We were looking for ways we could expand and diversify our release schedule,” explained Tom Schumacher, vice-president of Disney’s feature animation division. “We had many films in progress in traditional animation, but we wanted to work in different disciplines, as well. That led, not only to our working with Pixar, but also with Tim Burton on stop-motion animation for THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. We also felt John Lasseter was a truly gifted artist, and we very specifically wanted to work with John.”

Pixar had already established a relationship with Disney by jointly developing the CAPS system, which Disney subsequently used to computer paint all their 2-D animated features, since THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER, a film Schumacher produced. “Disney was also very interested in hiring John Lasseter, and putting him on their own staff,” related Ralph Guggenheim, a producer of TOY STORY, and vice-president of Pixar’s film production unit. “However, John kept resisting Disney’s offers, because he knew that to create films using computer animation required more than just his talent. At Pixar, he had an able-bodied crew of technical people, whom he has known and worked with for years, plus he liked living up here.”

As a result, Disney realized that Pixar was the ideal candi-

date to produce a computer animated film. Pixar possessed the core group of sophisticated artists and technical experts, who had already pushed the boundaries of the field, with their skill at making short films and commercials. Disney approached Pixar president, Dr. Ed Catmull, to see if he would be interested in striking a deal. “We said, ‘Of course,’” recalled Catmull. “That was our goal all along. Initially, because the technology wasn’t there, it was always a project in the background. Then Disney said, ‘Let’s skip the TV special and go right to doing a feature.’ That was in the fall of 1990. Then in February of 1991 a story idea was pitched to Disney, they liked it, and that led to our signing a three-picture agreement. TOY STORY will be the first film of that agreement, and we’re already in development on our second picture.”

It then fell on the shoulders of Dr. Bill Reeves, the supervising technical director of TOY STORY, to implement an expanded animation system, where 27 separate animators would be able to work at separate workstations. “That only became possible within the last couple of years,” noted Reeves, “not only because of our increased rendering and storage power, but also from an economic standpoint. Of course, we could have done a feature years ago, but we didn’t want our first film to look like Satur-

day morning cartoons. We wanted to have a certain richness to the imagery, so that it would stand tall next to the classic Disney films. That wouldn't have been possible, if we tried to make a feature ten years ago. So we decided to wait until the time was right."

Pixar chose to avoid the fairytale genre for their first feature. "We wanted to play to our strengths for our first film," said Dr. Ed Catmull, Pixar's founder and chief. "We didn't want to start with something where the humans were the major characters. In *TIN TOY*, we had a problem with the baby, because it looked cute on paper, but in 3-D it looked a little grotesque, because the head was so large. It has to do with human perception. We want to make humans that are stylized, not real. The problem is, the closer you get to reality, that's when the brain starts to kick in with its auto-recognizers, and thinks something is a little weird. If you back-off, and make the humans more abstract, audiences will accept it more readily."

During the initial story meetings at Disney, Jeffrey Katzenberg made a key suggestion that was readily accepted by Pixar. "He was adamant about the toys' personalities being adult," said Lasseter. "Jeffrey told us, 'We're going to have a hard time selling this film to

Woody, Lasseter's *TOY STORY* cowboy star. Getting a performance is his primary job as a director.



TOY STORY

CGI DIRECTOR

John Lasseter on harnessing the technology in service of storytelling.

By Lawrence French

John Lasseter began his career, like many Disney animators, by attending Cal Arts, where he studied character animation. Lasseter completed two short films at Cal Arts, *THE LADY AND THE LAMP* and *NITEMARE*, both of which won student Academy Awards. Like his later shorts, Lasseter chose not to use dialogue in telling his stories.

"*TOY STORY* is really the first film I've ever made with dialogue," noted the director. "Telling a story without dialogue is kind of a challenge. In almost every film I've made, I've tried to challenge myself in some particular way, be it through storytelling, or technology, or whatever. It's fun to do a film without dialogue, because it's very difficult just using pantomime, so when you achieve your goal, it can be very satisfying. Then, the finished film will play anywhere. There's not an audience in the world that won't be able to watch it."

After graduating from Cal Arts, Lasseter was hired by Disney and worked on *THE FOX AND THE HOUND* and *MICKY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL*. Unfortunately, it was a time when Disney's animation was at its nadir, and artists like Lasseter, Tim Burton and Henry Selick quickly decamped from Disney to find more satisfying creative outlets.

"At Disney, you were made to feel like a cog in the wheel," said



Lasseter, rehearsing his actors, turned to directing *TOY STORY* after work on Pixar's award-winning animated shorts.

Lasseter. "The creative leadership at the time were all these guys who were assistant animators from 30 years ago, and they weren't very creative. They were working on projects like *THE BLACK CAULDRON* and *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*, and it was like, 'Oh my God!'"

One project that captured Lasseter's interest was *TRON*, although he didn't actually work on the film. "Bill Kroyer and Jerry Rees were doing some storyboards for *TRON*," remembers Lasseter. "They invited me to come by, and they showed me some dailies they had on the light cycle sequence from *MAGI Synthavision*. I thought, 'This is amazing stuff.' I didn't really know what computer animation was, but I got really excited, like a little door

was opening in my head, and seeing a whole new world out there.

"I thought it had tremendous potential, so I started talking to Tom Wilhite, Disney's head of production. He let me do a 30-second test film, working with *MAGI* in New York. Glen Keane and I did it, and we called it *THE WILD THINGS* 'test.' We took the little boy, Max, from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and had him run out of his bedroom, down the stairs, chasing after his dog. We had these neat moving cameras following Max, who was 2-D animation, and the whole thing was colored by a computer, using tone-mattes. It was in 1981, so it took a long time to do, but it was spectacular."

Lasseter hoped to get someone at Disney familiar with computer animation, because *TRON* was being made by outside companies, and as soon as it was over they would be gone. "I wanted to start getting some development going within Disney," said Lasseter, "because I thought they were finally doing something new and innovative. Unfortunately, before I finished *THE WILD THINGS*, Tom Wilhite left, and nobody had much interest in what I was doing. It was really before its time, because it finally freed the camera up, but they didn't see any potential in it. Joe Hale, the producer of *THE BLACK CAULDRON* and Art Stevens looked at it, but they thought it was too expensive. Hale said, 'I don't see anything here.'



Lasseter joined Pixar in 1984, when the company was still a division of Lucasfilm, and directed their early short, 1986's Oscar nominee LUXO JR.

"I couldn't believe it, because it was so exciting to me. In 2-D animation all you could do was go in and out, and sideways. Here we were actually going around objects. At the time, Disney animation had really reached a plateau, technology-wise. It was the same stories, being told with the same level of technology. The only thing new that had been developed since the late '50s was when they started to use Xeroxing. Now, of course all the Disney films are using computer animation techniques, like the ballroom sequence in *BEAUTY & THE BEAST*."

Lucky for Lasseter, Pixar's Ed Catmull saw the work he was doing on *THE WILD THINGS* and asked him to join his computer graphics team at Lucasfilm. Lasseter gained an immediate rapport with Pixar's computer experts, Bill Reeves and Eben Ostby, and decided this was a good place to accomplish some innovative filmmaking. The result was a series of remarkable short films made between 1984 and 1989 that allowed Lasseter to explore and refine his style in computer animation. "One of the things I like to do," explained Lasseter, "is create characters out of inanimate objects. It's easier for me to make a lamp hop, than mak-

ing a human walk, because no one's ever seen a lamp that's alive. That allows you to take certain liberties, and you can get away with a lot more."

When using inanimate objects for his characters, Lasseter would often give them strong characterizations, without resorting to putting faces on them. "I'm of a mindset, where I like to give life to an object, without putting eyes and a mouth on it," said Lasseter. "A lamp, like Luxo Jr., for instance, has nothing different about it from a real desk lamp. I thought about it, and since lamps create light, which has to do with sight, I decided they'd look out from where their light comes from. It becomes like their eyes. In *TOY STORY* we have toys, like Etch-A-Sketch, that walk around, and there's no question that they're alive, but we didn't put faces on them. It's more satisfying that way, because you believe the character a bit more, if it's exactly as you see it. They don't have a face that disappears when there's no one around."

The notion of bringing inanimate characters to life, ties in with Lasseter's whole definition of character animation. "It's not just moving objects around," said Lasseter. "To me, character animation is when you make it

HARNESSING THE GENIE

"The way I look at it, all animation is just one medium," said Lasseter. "It's only the tools that differentiate it. The focus needs to be on acting and characterization."

appear as if the object is driven by its own thought process. Not by somebody else who's pulling the strings. Often you can take a cup and put eyes on it, and people will say, 'It's a character.' Well, you can do that, but how well does it move? That's the kind of thing I'm looking for when I talk to the animators on *TOY STORY*. Often my comment to them will be, 'The character doesn't look like he's thinking on his own yet.'"

Lasseter's background in traditional 2-D animation helped him enormously when he began working exclusively in computer animation. "The way I look at it, all animation is just one medium," said Lasseter. "It's only the tools that differentiate it. I had been trained in 2-D animation, where the focus was on acting and character. I learned all the basic animation principles that had been taught and developed by Disney and others. Then when I started working with computer animation, I brought what I had learned with me, and started applying those techniques right away, when we did *ANDRE AND WALLY B*. I animated the characters using squash and stretch, follow-thru, anticipation, all the basic animation principles, and the charac-

ters just came alive.

"I remember when *ANDRE AND WALLY* was first shown in 1984, at Siggraph [the CGI convention], people came up to me and said, 'What kind of software did you use? It's amazing. How did you get the characters so alive?' It was just basic key-frame animation, like lots of people had, but then I realized that what people were actually seeing, was the use of traditional animation principles applied to computer graphics for the first time. That reinforced my belief in a thorough understanding of animation principles. Computer animation wasn't basically any different than any other animation medium. It's not the tools that you're using, it's the art itself."

Significantly, after his success at Pixar, Lasseter was asked by the new management at Disney to return to the fold, but as Ed Catmull, Pixar President related, "John felt there was something special happening here. Disney tried to get him twice. They offered him more money, and he still said no. Rather than being a director in a series of films at Disney, he felt he could do something really monumental at Pixar." On November 22nd, audiences can decide for themselves if he has succeeded. □

Experienced as an animator at Disney, Lasseter brought cartoon know-how to computer imaging, directing Pixar shorts like the 3-D *KNICKKNACK* in 1989.

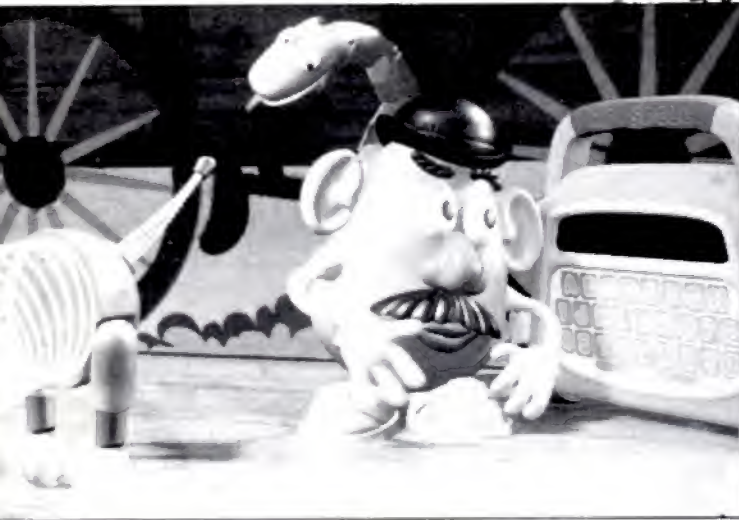


adults, because why would they want to see a movie about toys, if when the toys come alive, they all act like a bunch of kids?" So we got the notion of making the toys adults, when Andy, their owner, isn't around. Then you can bring in the whole interaction of adult personalities."

To extrapolate personalities from the toys, Lasseter began by carefully analyzing their functions. "Whenever I develop an inanimate object as a personality," explained Lasseter, "I try to think about what the object was manufactured for. The

THE KATZENBERG TOUCH

"Jeffrey Katzenberg was adamant about the toys' personalities being adult," said John Lasseter. "That led to making the toys act adult when their owner isn't around."



Producers Ralph J. Guggenheim, Pixar's VP of features and Bonnie Arnold (THE ADDAMS FAMILY). Inset: Mr. Potato-Head.

thing that toys want most, is to be played with by their owner. That's their goal. So their anxieties would come from something that prevents them from reaching their goal. They might be broken, they could be lost, or they could be replaced by newer toys. If that's the case, then clearly there are two days in a child's life that are the most anxiety-ridden of all for toys: Christmas, and the child's birthday. That laid the whole foundation for the time structure of our story. We start on Andy's birthday, and end on Christmas."

In the opening scenes of the movie, all the toys are introduced, anxiously awaiting the outcome of any new toys coming in, which could possibly replace them. Woody, Andy's favorite, is the leader of the other toys, and has sent out the green army men to reconnoiter the situation (Andy opening his presents). Everything seems to be going well, until Andy gets Buzz Lightyear, as a final surprise present. Buzz, with his pop-out wings, laser beam and wrist communicator, represents a clear threat to the job security of the other toys.

One of the film's more insecure characters is Rex, a cheap plastic Tyrannosaurus Rex. "JURASSIC PARK had just come out when we were developing the story," said Lasseter. "So we thought, 'We have to have a dinosaur toy.' I had this cheesy plastic T-Rex, and we studied that. The idea of the most fearsome, ferocious beast that ever walked this planet being so cheaply made, resulted in our making him really neurotic and insecure. Then we thought of Wally Shawn (MY DINNER WITH ANDRE) to do his voice, to make him like a neurotic New Yorker, and Wally really made the character come alive."

One of the conceits of the film is that the toys know about how they're made. "They know what kind of plastic they're made of," said Lasseter, "and all about the marketing and merchandising that goes with their character, like what age ranges are printed on the side of the boxes they come in."

Except for Buzz Lightyear. He doesn't realize he's a toy. He thinks he's crash-landed on a strange planet (Andy's bedroom), while on a secret mis-

sion to save the universe from the evil Emperor Zurg. He even thinks he can fly, a claim which Woody finds preposterous. "You're just a toy," Woody tells Buzz, feeling his once secure position in the work place is about to crumble.

To play Woody, Lasseter wanted Tom Hanks, who was always his number one choice for the role. "The reason I wanted Tom," explained Lasseter, "is because no matter what he does he's always appealing to the audience. We really needed that kind of actor for Woody, because we had to establish him as a likable character, with a little bit of insecurity underneath. Then when Buzz Lightyear arrives, it throws his life totally out of balance. He starts to make all the wrong choices, and he just turns into a real jerk."

For Buzz Lightyear, Tim Allen was chosen, although Lasseter found him a bit harder to picture in the role. "That's because we had Buzz's original personality as much more of a Dudley Doright kind of superhero," revealed Lasseter. "I really liked Tim's show, HOME IMPROVEMENT, and we were

all inspired by that, but after our first recording session was over, it was a little different than what we had pictured. So we analyzed the dialogue, and realized that what Tim does so well is the everyday, normal guy, who really thinks he's something special, but it's clear there's a lot of insecurities underneath. It's like this macho guy with a soft underbelly."

For the voice of Mr. Potato-Head, abusive comic Don Rickles was called upon, as his character is a rabble-rouser, always casting doubt on the situation. "Mr. Potato-Head's facial features are always falling off," remarked Lasseter, "so we thought, 'You'd have a chip on your shoulder too, if every day you had a problem keeping your facial features on. He feels inferior in his own mind, to everyone else, so he insults everyone, in order to appear better than them.'"

Lasseter remembers visiting Rickles at his house in Malibu, to woo him for the role. "I had brought a Mr. Potato-Head with me," said Lasseter, "and showed it to Don, and as I handed it to him, his hat fell off, and Don was holding it, and they both had the bald head, and it looked just like him. I thought, 'This is perfect casting.' Don loved doing it, and has a great wit, which is just below the surface. He has those little barbs he can nail you with, but it's always done in fun."

To create additional toy characters, the story team drew on their own memories of toys they played with, while they were growing up. "We had endless amounts of material to work with," said Stanton, "because everybody is an authority on toys. We all grew up with toys, and used those experiences in the movie."

One of Stanton's memories was taking his G.I. Joe doll out to an empty field, putting an M-80 firecracker in a knapsack, placing it on Joe's back, and putting him in a running position while yelling, "Run Joe, run, the bomb's going to explode!" Then he'd light the firecracker and poor Joe would be blown to smithereens.

continued on page 27

TOY STORY

PIXAR

Writing the book on CGI and computer animation.

By Lawrence French

In 1979, George Lucas, flush from the success of STAR WARS, envisioned great leaps in the advancement of motion picture technology. To begin research and development in that area, he hired Dr. Ed Catmull, the director of the computer graphics lab at the N.Y. Institute of Technology. "Our initial charter," says Catmull, "was to develop technology for digital audio, digital editing, and computer graphics. So I brought in somebody over each of those areas."

By the early '80s, Catmull had proposed a computerized editing system, later to be known as EditDroid, under the direction of Ralph Guggenheim; a digital audio signal processor for sound mixing; and the Pixar image computer, for rendering high resolution images, a computer graphics research effort under Alvy Ray Smith. "At the time computer graphics was viewed mainly as effects," notes Catmull, "but it still wasn't economical. We had

to solve some problems to make it more practical. First, we had to have motion-blur, if we were going to be used in feature films. Secondly, we had to plan our systems and algorithms around the faster computers that we knew would become available in the future. Finally, we had to get to a point where artists could design the models and their appearances. It required a great deal of technical expertise to use the equipment, so we began to design systems that artists could use, not just the technical people."

While at Lucasfilm, the computer graphics division contributed sequences to a mere three feature films. Although Lucas was funding their research, there was a degree of reluctance to trust CGI to actual production. At the time it was still a very new and unproven medium for effects work, and films that had used it extensively, like TRON and THE LAST STARFIGHTER, were not successful.

In 1984, to gain production experience on the new tech-



The toddler holy terror of TIN TOY, Pixar's 1988 Oscar-winning short, directed by John Lasseter, their first effort to feature a human character.

niques they had been developing, Catmull began work on a demonstration film, THE ADVENTURES OF ANDRE AND WALLY B. "At the time, we didn't have another project to work on," says technical director Bill Reeves, "so we decided to invent a little short, to show what we could do in CGI." The only hitch was, "We weren't supposed to be making films," recalls layout supervisor, Craig Good. "We were a research and development group, not a film-making department, so ANDRE & WALLY was officially just a demo for Siggraph [the computer graphics convention]."

To work on ANDRE AND WALLY, Catmull invited Disney animator John Lasseter to Lucasfilm, after being impressed with Lasseter's short computer film, THE WILD THINGS test. "Ed called me

and said they had an idea for a short film," remembered Lasseter. "It was supposed to be about an android character in the woods. Well, it was at Lucasfilm, so I thought they wanted to do something with robots. Instead of that, I proposed we do something more cartoony. I was inspired by early Mickey Mouse cartoons, and did a bunch of drawings for the main character, Andre. When I showed it to them, I thought they were going to hate it, but they said, 'This is really great, nobody's ever done this before in CGI.'"

Since Catmull's ultimate dream was to make a feature film in CGI, it soon became clear he was on a divergent course from his employer. "Lucasfilm wasn't set up where somebody else could come in and make animated films," recalled Catmull. "So we approached George, and said, 'We want to do things that are different, maybe you should sell off the division.' We then went through a period of about a year, getting ready to divest ourselves from Lucasfilm." Steven Jobs, the co-founder of Apple computer, eventually purchased the division, which was now officially christened "Pixar."

As an independent company, Pixar formed a small animation unit, and began making short films. "We were doing three pieces for Siggraph in 1986,"

Admiral Ackbar calls up Pixar's holographic 3-D schematic of the Death Star seen in RETURN OF THE JEDI (1983).





Pixar hires John Lasseter away from Disney and produces their first short, **THE ADVENTURES OF ANDRE AND WALLY B.** in 1984, while still at ILM.

recalled producer Ralph Guggenheim. "One was Bill Reeves doing a realistic simulation of ocean waves, another was a whimsical little story about a beach chair that walks down to the ocean and dips its toe into the water, while the third was John Lasseter's idea to tell a story using his desk lamp. **LUXO, JR.** was born out of that, and was nominated for an Academy Award."

Pixar went on to make a short film a year, spending about six months researching different ways of improving their software and equipment, while the other six months were spent making a film, to implement the results of their research. "The short films laid the foundations for the core animation system we're using today," said Reeves. "Then, after we did **KNICK-KNACK**, we realized if we kept making shorts, we wouldn't have the production experience or staff needed to make a feature. To get more production experience, we decided to make television commercials, because we couldn't pay our staff on the basis of the short films. They didn't produce any income."

Then, in July of '91, Disney signed Pixar to an exclusive three-picture contract. "Now, we can only make films for Disney," said Catmull. "Back when Steve Jobs bought Pixar from Lucasfilm, he funded our animation shorts, with the belief that at some point we would come through. Looking back, it could have gone either way. Now, with **TOY STORY** nearly complete, we've lived up to our expectations." □

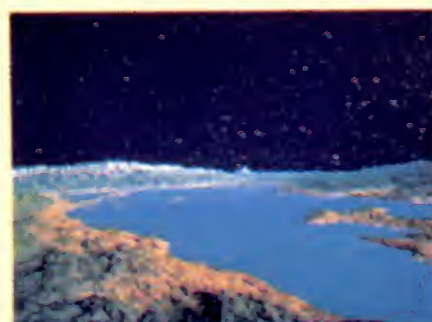
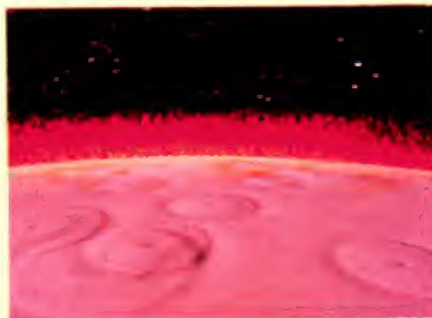
STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (1982)

Jim Veilleux, ILM's special effects supervisor on **STAR TREK II**, proposed that CGI be used for what eventually became the Genesis planet sequence. "They didn't really know what they wanted," said Bill Reeves. "They just said, 'Try and come up with something interesting.'"

"Originally they had these storyboards where a grey rock in a glass case turned green," recalled Ed Catmull. "Then Alvy Ray Smith said, 'Why don't we have Kirk and Spock looking at a planet, and we'll simulate turning the dead planet into a life-like planet.' So we story-boarded out a whole sequence, and designed it as one continuous shot. Then, after spending five months doing it, using particle systems and fractals, we were worried they'd cut away to the actors, right in the middle of the shot. Of course, that's exactly what they did." At least the characters were impressed with what they were watching. Spock turns to Kirk and says, "Fascinating."

"We didn't have much software for that, so a lot of what we did was just a home-brew of different stuff we had cobbled together," said Reeves. "I did all the particle systems to create the fire, while Tom

Pixar's "Genesis Planet" demo from **STAR TREK II** for ILM, an eye opener for even Kirk & Spock.



Duff did the cratered moon. Tom Porter put together the very beginnings of our compositing language and did the starfields as well. Loren Carpenter did all the fractals for the mountains that rise out of the burning planet. It was amazing, because we had all these separate programs that didn't tie together. Now, we have a system where everything works together."

RETURN OF THE JEDI (1983)

Bill Reeves and Tom Duff created the brief scenes of CGI used in **RETURN OF THE JEDI**. Admiral Ackbar gives a presentation to the Rebel fleet, outlining how to penetrate and destroy the Death Star. He is aided by a holographic 3-D representation of the unfinished battle station, as it orbits around the forest moon of Endor. "We worked with Joe Johnston [visual effects art director] and Bruce Nicholson [optical supervisor] on **JEDI**," said Reeves. "Joe had a lot of designs, and we used on old Evans & Sutherland line drawing display. All it could do was draw lines, there were no pixels, or color. We just put a camera in a room, got it pitch black, and shot our elements right off the screen. Then we took it to Bruce Nicholson, who burnt it into the live-action plate. Bruce would have to do multiple passes in order to get the different colors [Green for the Endor Moon, Red for the Death Star]."

THE ADVENTURES OF ANDRE AND WALLY B. (1984)

After waking up one morning in a (very stylized) forest, Andre encounters a playful bee, whom he attempts to elude (unsuccessfully). "I brought in John Lasseter from Disney," said Catmull, "because he had a vision that wasn't fitting in with Disney at that time, but it fit in perfectly with what we wanted to do. At first it was on a temporary basis, but it soon became permanent."

"One of the problems I had on **ANDRE**," explained Lasseter, "was that I had to use all geometric primitives (basic geometric shapes) to build the characters. I wanted Andre to have a sort of tear-drop shape, and I thought it would be difficult to make his body that way. Ed Catmull looked at the drawings and said, 'I think we can come up with something like that.' So we invented this tear-drop shape that was really flexible, and I got so inspired I started to animate it real loosely, like a water balloon. Out of that came the inspiration for the bee, which had these giant feet that were just floating below him. There were no legs connecting the feet to the body. Then, when the bee flies off, the feet would just drag way behind and catch-up, which gave us this neat overlapping action."

"All the forest backgrounds were done using Particle systems," said Reeves, "and we used two Cray supercomputers in Minneapolis to render the characters. We were trying to see how fast a Cray would go, and it wasn't very fast."



Pixar's last ILM assignment, enlivening a stained glass window in **YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES**.

YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES (1985)

For the effect of a knight springing to life off of a stained glass window, effects maestro Dennis Muren wanted to attempt CGI, thinking it would be more effective than traditional stop-motion. "Dennis was interested in seeing what we could come up with," recalled Reeves. "He came over and showed us the sequence, and we all got very excited about doing it. There were a lot of stained glass windows out at Skywalker ranch, so we had the glass studio which made those windows build us a little stained glass knight, which we could use for reference. If we hadn't come through, Dennis would have probably used that model for stop-motion. He was really taking a chance on us, because at the time, nobody really knew if we could do it."

When the CGI sequences were completed, instead of being filmed off a video monitor, the images were transferred directly onto film, via one of the earliest uses of a laser scanner. David DiFrancesco, the head of Pixar's photo science, developed and built one of the first laser recorders while at Lucasfilm. "That was the first use of a laser recorder to put images on a feature film," said DiFrancesco. "Now that recorder is at the George Eastman House Museum, as part of their permanent collection."

LUXO JR. (1986)

"**LUXO JR.** began as an opportunity for John Lasseter to model on the computer," said Ralph Guggenheim. "John had done animation before, but had never done modeling."

"It was originally a 15-second test," recalled Lasseter, "but it kept growing and growing, because I came up with the storyline after I got started on it. I like the idea of bringing inanimate objects to life, so I got the notion of having two desk lamps that were alive."

Pixar leaves the Lucasfilm womb and makes **LUXO JR.**, giving life to father and son desk lamps.



The film is quite remarkable in that Lasseter is able to create a believable father and son characterization through a pair of realistic looking desk lamps in the space of only 90 seconds. LUXO JR. also showcased a new technique in computer graphics, self-shadowing, which allowed the lamps to accurately cast shadows on themselves. Years ago we came up with a statement, 'Reality is just a convenient measure of complexity,'" said Lasseter. "At Pixar, we tend to shoot for realistic images, to help us develop our tools. Then we take a step back and create things that can't possibly exist, but look very real [like the moving desk lamps in LUXO JR.]."

LUXO JR. is also notable for its highly imaginative stereo soundtrack, designed by Gary Rydstrom, who came to the film after Ben Burtt (STAR WARS), was unable to fit it into his schedule. Rydstrom went on to design the sound for all of Pixar's shorts, and will be doing a "spectacular soundtrack for TOY STORY," promised Bill Reeves. Since LUXO, JR., Rydstrom has gone on to win several Oscars for big-budget features like TERMINATOR 2 and JURASSIC PARK.



RED'S DREAM, Pixar's least known short, the melancholy visions of a forgotten unicycle.

RED'S DREAM (1987)

Perhaps the least known of Pixar's short films is RED'S DREAM. A melancholy tale about a forgotten unicycle, who on a rainy night, dreams of his former glories performing under the big top. The evocative mood and atmosphere captured by the film is quite impressive, as if an Edward Hopper painting were merged with a clown episode from a Fellini film. "We actually had two ideas that were happening at the same time," recalled Ralph Guggenheim. "John Lasseter had a desire to do a story about a unicycle that's alive, and Bill Reeves was doing some realistic rendering of rainfall on city streets."

"I saw the great imagery Bill was working with," said Lasseter, "and thought it fit into this circus story I had, which was causing me some story problems. It was originally going to be about this inept clown, and you find out that the person behind his act is really his unicycle, which is actually alive. So we took the images that Bill had, and combined them with my story to make it more of a dream sequence for this poor unicycle. At the time nobody had really done those kind of dark, moody images in computer graphics."

TIN TOY (1988)

Pixar's magnum opus introduced 'Tinny,' the tin toy of the title. Much like the toys in TOY STORY, Tinny attempts to please his owner, a toddler whose energetic enthusiasm, causes most of his toys to flee in terror under a nearby sofa.

"We wanted to push into human characters for the first time," noted Guggenheim, "so we designed a very carefully worked-out story. It was a very complex 55 shots in five and 1/2 minutes, done by only 8 people."

"TIN TOY was really an exhausting event for us," said Lasseter, "because it had all these firsts. It was the first use of our current animation system, our first use of a human character, and was twice as long as any film we had done before. We used every different piece of software we had, and the baby's face had 40 different muscles we could use for animating him."

Most of Pixar's shorts were made to debut at Siggraph, and took about six months to finish. TIN TOY, due to its 'epic' length, wasn't quite finished for the Siggraph film show. Consequently, the film was premiered only two thirds complete. "We ended on a cliffhanger," recalled Darwyn Peachey. "Tinny is running away from the baby, and he gets caught in the box, looking up through the cellophane, as the baby is looming overhead. It ended right there with a title, 'To be continued.' The whole audience just went, 'Oh no!'" When finally completed, TIN TOY went on to become the first computer-animated cartoon to receive an Academy Award.

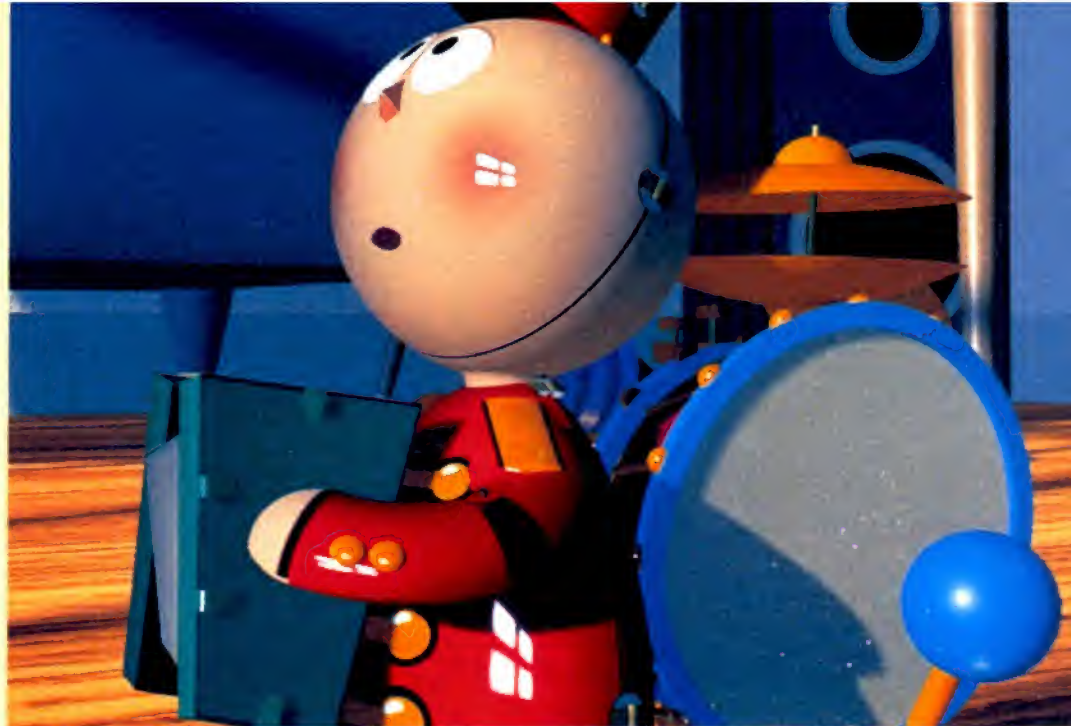
KNICKKNACK (1989)

"After exhausting ourselves making TIN TOY, we wanted to do something that was easier," revealed Lasseter. "During the making of TIN TOY, ROGER RABBIT had come out, and that was really an animator's movie. It had just wild animation, and after getting excited about it, I went back and looked at what I was doing. It seemed like everybody was standing still. So I was inspired to do something more cartoony for KNICKKNACK."

"Since we wanted to do something simpler," said Guggenheim, "John thought, 'Why don't we do something like a Chuck Jones cartoon.' So we came up with the idea of a snowman trying to get out of his glass snowglobe."

"KNICKKNACK has much more of a cartoon sense of reality," noted Lasseter. "The snowman walks off and comes back with a blow torch or something else, and is

The snowglobe star of Pixar's **KNICKKNACK**, their computer homage to animator Chuck Jones.



Tinny, star of Pixar's **TIN TOY**, the 1988 short that won them an Academy Award and led to the formation of their feature film division and TOY STORY.

continually frustrated, trying to get out of his globe. We just played off those cartoon type of situations."

KNICKKNACK was done as a polarized 3-D film, and each frame had to be rendered twice, to realize the 3-D effect. "The nice thing about doing 3-D in computer graphics," said Guggenheim, "is you have your main camera view, and all you have to do is set up another virtual camera, about five degrees off center axis, to get your second view."

"We tried not to push the 3-D effects too much," said Bill Reeves. "We just used it to get the depth. It's pronounced in a couple of shots, like when he's falling off the table, but we didn't want to do the typical thing, and give everyone watching it a headache. Very few people ever get to see it in 3-D, but when we showed it at Siggraph that year, it was a big hit."

SURPRISE and LIGHT AND HEAVY (1991)

"At Pixar, the characters become like employees, you get to know them so strongly," said John Lasseter.

So when Pixar was asked to do educational pieces for Sesame Street, they thought of using Luxo Jr. and Sr. to visually illustrate the meaning of the words, light and heavy.

"We jumped at the chance to do it," said Lasseter, "because we all loved Sesame Street. Luxo is really a very simple character, and we've used him as a training tool, so people can learn simple hierarchy. The way models are structured on the computer, they're built on simple hierarchies, and with Luxo it's quite simple, because you just move his base, and that moves him. Previously I had used Luxo to illustrate a course at Siggraph. It demonstrated that how fast you move an object can determine how heavy the object will feel. So we did a little vignette where Luxo comes hopping in and starts moving around the exact same size sphere. First he does it very fast, which makes it seem like a beach ball, then he comes back and does it slowly, putting a lot of effort into moving it, so it feels very heavy. I showed that to the Sesame Street people, and they liked it, so that's what we used."

SURPRISE, was a very short 30-second piece, animated by Andrew

Stanton, where Luxo Sr. finds a wrapped box and out of it pops Luxo Jr., surprising his Dad.

The Luxo family returned in **SURPRISE**, Pixar's swan song to short films for **SESAME STREET**.



TOY STORY (1995)

The world's first computer-animated feature film, produced in association with Walt Disney Studios. Computer time to render: 500,000 machine hours; 57 machine years. Person years to make: 200. Memory to store: 1000 gigabytes (1 terabyte). Number of models: 400. Number of textures and appearances: 3,500 (approx.). Running time: 78 minutes.

In its early stages of story development, TOY STORY had quite a different ending. An attempt was made to get a Barbie doll to help rescue Woody from the tortures of the damned, which awaited him trapped in Sid's room. Unfortunately, Mattel wouldn't let go of their highly prized commodity, perhaps fearing she would be "commercialized" by appearing in a Disney film, and the planned ending had to be scrapped.

"What we had originally," revealed Andrew Stanton, "was to have Woody trapped in Sid's room. Then, the mutant toys were going to run next door to get help from Hannah's bedroom (Sid's sister)."

"Barbie was to come driving in, in her little red Corvette, dressed like Ivana Trump," recalled Andrew Stanton. "Barbie would act tough, like Linda Hamilton in TERMINATOR 2, and say to Woody, 'Get in if you want to live.' We should thank Mattel because they forced us to make a better ending! The ending we had originally robbed Woody of the chance to find his own solution to the situation." □

TOY STORY

LICENSING

Reaping a bonanza in toy sales is key to the story.

By Lawrence French

Disney stands to reap a merchandising bonanza from the toys that have been invented for TOY STORY, particularly its spaceman action figure Buzz Lightyear. "We thought that this spaceman action figure could be a toy that's from some TV show," said director John Lasseter. "He's potentially part of some big merchandising spin-off, and with him would come all the other stuff, bedsheets, posters and all that, which seems to happen when you get a big push from some large corporation."

For the film's supporting characters, it was decided to use real toys, mixed in with toys that had been invented specifically

Little Bo Peep stands-in for one toy Disney couldn't clear—Mattel turned down the use of Barbie.



for the film. "We felt that would give a sense of reality to the story," explained Lasseter. "When I go into my kids' bedroom, there are clearly toys that you recognize, then there are toys you've never seen before, but it's all sort of merged together. So we have different size action figures, mixed in with teaching toys, (like See & Says, or Speak & Spells). Then you have piggy banks, and toys he got when he was younger, like Playskool and Little Tykes. We wanted to get the feeling across of a big melting pot."

Although Pixar used existing toys, a prerequisite for their inclusion was they had to have stood the test of time. "We didn't want to look back in 10 years and see that nobody knew what those toys were," said storyboard artist Andrew Stanton. "So we only used the classics, like Mr. Potato-Head, Etch-A-Sketch, Green Army Men, and Barrel of Monkeys."

Obtaining the rights to use real toys proved to be a fairly easy task, since Disney has relationships with most of the leading toy companies. "John [Lasseter] picked the toys he wanted, and we went after those rights," explains Tom Schumacher. "John actually went to the Slinky factory, and met with the widow of the inventor of the Slinky. She was thrilled that Slinky Dog would be used in the movie. In a few cases, there were toys we couldn't use. We had some toys that weren't main characters, and were just in brief shots, but we still had to get them all cleared by our business affairs department."



Disney had to clear the use of classic toys like Mr. Potato-Head, whose lawyer was said to be difficult, though no money changed hands either way.

As a result, Disney made no payments to obtain any of the toy rights for the movie. Likewise, none of the toy companies paid Disney any fees for the use of their toys. "We had the hardest time getting the clearance for Mr. Potato-Head," revealed Stanton. "They actually had to call Mr. Potato-Head's lawyer, so we were always joking about Mr. Potato-Head's lawyer giving us a hard time. Then when the clearances came through, we'd all cheer."

Even though Disney was involved in the early stages of the story, nobody could really foresee how the project would turn out. "The toy companies really had to take an on-faith leap," said Stanton, "because when it comes to legal issues and rights, they are very cautious. But everyone at Pixar knew that when the film came out, they'd all be begging us to use their toys!"

Indeed, if the film does any-

where near the business of what the recent Disney animation hits have amassed, there may be some long faces at Mattel, who refused to grant a licence for the use of the Barbie doll. "It will be like in E.T., when Mars candy refused to let them use M&M's," laughed storyboard artist Joe Ranft. "Instead Reese's Pieces sales went way up."

Lasseter actually thinks Disney may have overlooked one toy merchandising bonanza: marketing the "mutant toys" mix-n'-match assemblages akin to Tod Browning's FREAKS. "They actually missed the boat on merchandising them, because they aren't going to be making any of the mutant toys," said Lasseter. "I think it would be a great idea to have a whole line of mutant toys. You could have a set of different parts, and they'd all have universal joints, so you could put them back together and refashion them in different ways." □

Director John Lasseter insisted on the use of real toys to add verisimilitude. The widow of the inventor of Slinky was thrilled to have Slinky Dog included.



That incident is used in the film, to introduce us to Sid, the nasty kid who lives next door to Andy, and loves to torture his toys. He and his dog, a pit bull named Scud, represent the film's biggest threat to Woody and Buzz, when they both end up trapped in Sid's room. "When I heard Andrew Stanton tell his G.I. Joe story, I thought, 'That is Sid,'" exclaimed Lasseter. "When we were developing Sid, we really wanted everyone watching to get the feeling they knew someone like him, or maybe did that themselves when they were kids. Joe Ranft was really like Sid. He was such a hyper kid, his toys would all be broken the day after Christmas. He and his brother would take Tonka trucks and do these crash tests, where they'd shove the trucks as fast as they could right into each other. Then they'd drop cinder blocks on top of them. So Sid came out of experiences we had in our own childhood, either of kids we knew who wrecked their toys, or of things we did ourselves to toys, when we were playing with them."

If Joe Ranft was like Sid, he claims Lasseter is more like Andy. "All of John's toys were well taken care of and in perfect condition," said Ranft. "He still has them in his office, in little display cases. We thought, 'That's another slant to the toys. What if your toys were collected, put on display and never played with?' It's almost as bad as what Sid does to his toys."

The toys in Sid's bedroom are a complete contrast to Andy's toys, because Sid likes to rip his toys apart, and put them back together in grotesque and funny ways. These mutant toys, unlike the normal toys in Andy's room, don't have any anxieties about being replaced. Instead, their goal is not to be played with. They're hoping to be lost or outgrown, so they can escape from the vicious Sid. Tod Browning's *FREAKS* was somewhat of an inspiration for the mutant toys, but Lasseter noted, "We were also thinking in terms of contrasts between Andy's room and Sid's room. In Andy's room, it's fairly clean, the lighting is warm and cozy, and the toys are well taken care of. In Sid's room it's dirty, dark

MODERN TIMES 'TOONS

"We edit the entire movie first in storyboard form," said producer Bonnie Arnold. "It's like an assembly line. As each shot moves through the pipeline, it's refined."



Performance animation: supervising animator Pete Docter works on developing an expression of surprise for Woody (inset).



and cluttered, and although the mutant toys look horrific, once you learn who they are, they turn out to be the most selfless characters in the film."

To develop the story initially, Joe Ranft and Andrew Stanton storyboarded each sequence, and then turned their boards into animatic story reels, with temporary "scratch" voices for the dialogue. The new twist to the process came with the use of the Avid Digital Media Composer, which is quickly making the traditional form of cut and splice editing (involving workprints and moviolas), obsolete. "I've done a lot of storyboards," said Ranft, "but they have always been filmed. With the Avid system, we could turn a sequence around a lot faster. The whole nonlinear ability of the Avid allowed us to keep finessing sequences until they were taken out of our hands. We boarded every sequence in the film two or three times, and some we did four or five times. With the Avid, John could say, 'Let's add this drawing into the

sequence,' and I'd go draw it up, and it would get digitized into the sequence. It allowed us to make changes much quicker than if we were going to film."

TOY STORY will be one of the first animated films to be completely edited using the Avid system. "We basically edit the entire movie first, in storyboard form," said co-producer Bonnie Arnold. "It's sort of like an assembly line, because as each shot moves through the production pipeline, it gets further refined. Then, it can be slugged into our ongoing rough cut, and we can see the changes we've made incredibly fast. We replace the initial storyboards with a crude version of the shot, called rough polys. They just show the action, they aren't lit or rendered yet. Then, when we get our lighting finals, we can drop that into the Avid. It was really a great match with our computer technology."

During the ongoing storyboarding of the sequences, before the final script was approved for production, there were on-going meetings with the president and vice-president of Disney's feature animation

division, Peter Schneider and Tom Schumacher, who would approve the sequences, or send them back for more work with notes and comments.

"Initially we were nervous about working with Disney," revealed Ed Catmull, "because we thought they might roll over us, and try to tell us what to do artistically. But it turned out far better than we ever thought it would. They can be tough, but they are very clear that the movie comes first. All criticism dealt with what wasn't working in the movie, and as a result we never had any disagreements. If

something isn't working, that's not an attack on our ego, it simply means we have to fix it. We never had a situation where Disney was telling us to do this or that. It was a very open situation, where everyone was just trying to make the movie better."

Although it was a harmonious relationship, in the early stages of the story development, there was a brief time when Disney considered whether or not the film could be made as a "break-out-in-song" type of musical. Disney's music department was asked to look at the story, and send suggestions to the Pixar story staff. "It was almost verbatim, what we had said we didn't want in the movie," laughed Stanton. "They said, 'It needs a love story, it needs a villain, it needs songs to be sung by the characters.' That just made it really clear to us, that we didn't want to do that kind of story. We were lucky, because they trusted John [Lasseter] enough to let him try and pull it off. We were supported by the fact that it was such a new medium, and it was a buddy picture, which Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg

liked, because they had done 48 HOURS when they were together at Paramount.”

Eventually, Randy Newman (RAGTIME) wrote three songs for the film, but they will all be sung by Newman, not any of the film's characters. At one point, there was some discussion about having Tom Hanks and Tim Allen do a duet of “Strange Things Are Happening To Me,” a song that occurs during the transformation of Andy's room from a western motif into outer space decor. “It never got that serious,” said Stanton, “but just the fact that they mentioned it gave us the chills. Then, when we talked to Tom Hanks about playing Woody, the first thing he said was, ‘You don't expect me to sing, do you?’”

Since computer animation allows for a simulated camera-eye that has virtually no restraints on where it can go, or how fast it can move, the temptation to dazzle audiences with dizzying camera movement has often been rife in the computer graphics field. Just imagine Kenneth Branagh or Oliver Stone directing a CGI film.

“Many of the artists at Pixar dislike the typical style of computer graphics,” noted John Good, supervisor of Pixar's layout department. “We're trying to do something different and better. The problem is, that until

Buzz, poised for takeoff. Layout sets the camera angle, leaving it to the animator to move the figure.



TOY STORY

CGI PRODUCTION

Pixar modified and developed their experience on shorts for feature work.

By Lawrence French

In the production system developed by Pixar, sequences are first rendered and approved as storyboards. The boards go to the art department where overall lighting and color schemes are determined by art director Ralph Eggleston, working in close consultation with the director. Then 3-D models are made of the characters, sets and props, either directly in the computer from drawings, or sometimes by digitizing sculptures directly into the computer.

“We made a lot of models using the Alias software modeling system,” says animation scientist Darwyn Peachey. “With Alias you can make shapes and modify them with your mouse. We did that most of the time, from drawings the art department provided. If you're digitizing a sculpture into the system, it has to be designed exactly the right way. It's different from making a sculpture that simply looks good. You have to be able to get the digitizing pen into the body parts, where you want it. If you can't get into the joints, or backside of the sculpture, that can be a problem.”

Eben Ostby, one of the chief model makers, explained that the technicians who make the models give them not only their shape, but the many controls the animator will need to manipulate the characters' movement. “Our final animation models have a much higher level of con-



Modeller Eben Ostby works with a full-size maquette of Scud, Sid's dog, defining the character digitally as a computer database.

trols, than in most animation systems,” said Ostby. “To get a figure to rotate, it might take several controls in another system, where we would have just one control to do the same thing. The animators like that.”

The basic blocking of the scenes occurs in the layout department. Craig Good, a long-time Pixar employee who supervised post-production on the Pixar short films, was put in charge of layout, since he had a wide range of experience, including still photography. “In traditional 2-D animation, layout provides the backgrounds that people work in,” noted Good. “We provide that function by being the last step of modeling and the first step of animation. We assemble the scene, taking the computer models of the characters and the props, and get them in their

rough positions. We're the first step into the 3-D world, and it's a big step away from the drawings.”

Sometimes drawings that don't work are sent to layout, and have to be resolved before the shot can be animated. “We had a drawing where Woody put his arm around Slinky Dog,” said Good. “It was a tight two-shot, but Woody was a foot tall, and Slinky is about four inches off the ground, so it didn't work. We have to solve those kinds of problems. We have to keep the characters relative size the same, from shot to shot, and we implement the proper sight lines. We have to do all those things before it goes to animation.”

Layout is also the department where the all-important camera moves are formulated. “We do the things a cameraman on a live-action film would do,” said Good, “except we're not concerned with the lighting. We tried to follow established film grammar, in both our camera moves and the editing. We do camera moves that could happen in real life, with real cameras.”

When the layout department has roughly assembled the scene, it is handed off to the animators. “The animator gets a complete shot to work with,” said Good. “It's got the camera sitting there, so they don't have to do anything but concentrate on the acting. If we let the animators set the camera angle, they might try to compose an angle to suit their particular shot, and while it might



Even in Pixar's brave new computer world, the process begins with acting and drawing: supervising animator Pete Docter works on giving Woody grit.

work better as an individual shot, it's the editorial flow that matters. We have to keep the larger picture in mind, and the connections across the cuts." However, the animator does get some control over camera movement, since the shot has to match the moves of the character they're animating.

When the animator receives a shot to animate, it can be anywhere from 60 to 600 frames of film (or 2 1/2 to 26 seconds). At this stage, the characters are represented by rough polygon shapes (polys), or sometimes by wireframe figures. This simplified view of the character allows the computer to work much faster than it would if the character was fully detailed. Supervising animator Pete Docter would normally begin the process of animating a shot by taking the dialogue in the scene and breaking it down into phrases.

"I try to find subtleties and voice inflections which might serve as guides to the character's movement," explained Docter. "In one shot, Woody has been pushed under Andy's bed. All the kids have come running into Andy's room to look at his new toy, Buzz. Woody always sits on top of the bed, and suddenly he finds himself down below, and it's like being in the sewer to him. All the other toys see him on the floor, so I thought Woody's first reaction would be, 'I'm not supposed to be here, I've been caught.' In the first phase of moving him, I tried to give him a bit of a shock, as he's trying to regain his bearings. Then, I thought he'd try to brush

it off, and cover it up. Finally, as the last bit, I thought he'd try to explain it away as a mistake, getting a little bit angry that he's been discovered on the floor. From there, I explore those ideas with little thumbnail drawings, just some poses and actions for Woody to do."

As it is, animation of a standard 14-second shot (336 frames), could typically take two weeks of an animators time. That means, if one animator (say, Ray Harryhausen), was working alone on the movie, it would take over 13 years to complete the animation (or the same amount of time it takes Stanley Kubrick to make a live-action film).

For the initial rough animation, there are three axes of movement, X: front and back, Y: side to side, and Z: up and down. During the general blocking of the movement, several key frames can be chosen, and locked into the computer memory, which will then create the in-between motion for the character. "For a slow movement, I might have key frames every 10 or 15 frames, and for a faster motion, every other frame," said Docter. "Then, for timing the in-between movement, I can adjust the speed with splines [a computer control]. On top of that, at every joint in the body, we have separate controls, so for a movement of Woody's fingers, we have a combination of about 20 different controls."

When the final animation has been completed, the scene is still without any shadows, textures or lighting effects. At that

ANIMATING WOODY, CGI

"At every joint in the body we have separate controls," said Docter. "For a movement of Woody's fingers, we have a combination of about 20 different controls."

point, all the objects in the scene that are visible to the camera need to have surfaces added to them, which is accomplished through shading. "If we light the scene before it's shaded, we'll fail," explained Tom Porter, head shader and visual effects chief. "All the surfaces are initially plastic, and the computer doesn't know about the reflectivity of different objects in the room. So somebody has to come in, and write a program that enables the computer to determine the reflectivity of every different surface in the room. Only then can the lighting be added, so it will look right in the final film."

Once the painters and shaders have added the surfaces, and made them suitably lived-in, the shot is ready to be lit. The lighting technicians then place virtual lights in the shot, and mold in just as you would light a live-action film. "You can shape the light, change its intensity and color, and place shadows," said Sharon Calahan, who with Galyn Susman, are the lighting heads for TOY STORY. "We normally have a meeting with John Lasseter and art director Ralph Eggleston, and they tell us what their vision for the scene is,

to get us going. Then we go and do the main lighting of the room, if it's indoors, and set the light sources, as well as the colors of the light. After we light the scene, the computer renders it, which takes about five minutes. It's a slow process that takes a great deal of patience."

Calahan and Susman are the equivalent to the lighting cameraman on a live-action film, but when they receive the shot, it's basic composition has already been set. "We take the composition," explained Susman, "and fill in spaces with shadows, add definition to it, and try to make the shot work better with our lights. We can actually separate the shadows from the light that's casting them, and then we can color the shadows, completely independently."

During a dramatic scene when Buzz and Woody have a reconciliation, they are standing near a window that raindrops are falling on. To light the scene, Calahan looked at the rain sequence from IN COLD BLOOD, shot by Conrad Hall. "We looked at different movies to study flashlight effects and lens flares, things like that," said Calahan. □

Lighting supervisors Sharon Callahan (l) and Galyn Sussman, casting shadows for the demonic Sid. Inset: an example of the dramatic lighting found in Sid's room.



the last few years only people with Ph.Ds could run the software. It was like having paintings done by the chemists who mix the paint. We hate these camera moves where you go flying off through space, that makes everyone in the audience reach for their Dramamine. We did a couple of moves that were fancy, but most are shots that you could do in real life."

Another typical problem in CGI is if a character appears too small in a scene, the camera is usually just moved in, to make him larger. It is somewhat equivalent to the overuse of the



ARTISTIC RESTRAINT, CGI

"We hate those camera moves where you go flying through space," said layout chief John Good, "that make everyone in the audience reach for their Dramamine."



Hand designed: art director Ralph Eggleston with the sketches that define each sequence. Inset: A green army man reports.

zoom lens, when it was first introduced. "We base the selection of our [virtual] lenses on real perspective," noted Good. "If you try to take still portraits of people up close, with regular lenses, you'll get distortion in their faces. That's why there's a medium telephoto lens."

Several shots in TOY STORY bear the influence of other directors, and were named accordingly by the crew. "We have a Branagh-cam shot," said Good, "for the way the camera circled around in FRANKENSTEIN. It's a point in the film where the other toys think that Woody has deliberately pushed Buzz out of a window. So they all attack him, the green army men, and all the other toys are coming at him, and we arc around him, but we use it sparingly [unlike its overuse in FRANKENSTEIN]. Then we have a Michael Mann-cam, for the kind of thing he did in MIAMI VICE, where there's a shot of a Corvette and the wheels are spinning. We have a tanker truck that pulls into a gas station, and there's a shot locked to the truck, looking past the big wheels that are rotating in the

frame, while Woody's lying on the ground."



If the 27 animators who labored to create the film's characters, very few had any previous computer animation experience. "Most of them came from hand-drawn animation," said Lasseter. A few came from computer animation, some from stop-motion, and a couple from clay. The key, though, was that they were able to create characters through animation, no matter what the medium, and make you believe those characters were alive. As a consequence, every one of our animators was chosen for his acting ability. We have great characters, and we hired animators who could give us great performances. That's really what I'm hoping will stand out in the film: the acting. We're trying to get a real depth of character into the film, so that when people come out of the theater, they'll feel like those toys were real."

To help them master the computer technology, the animators were kept somewhat fo-

cused in the production process. "Their only chore is animation," said Bill Reeves. "It's the most essential chore of the movie, but they don't have to know about all the other technical things in order to succeed. That allowed us to bring in an extremely talented group of people, who have worked in all different areas, and only a few were familiar with computer animation. Even with that isolation, it's still difficult for animators to learn the computer, when they're coming in cold. There's a learning curve, and they struggle to get it for awhile, but if they have a desire to learn, then most of them can make great progress. The fundamental concepts of computer animation are pretty universal. Key framing, the concept of 3-D animation, vs. flat 2-D animation, those were some of the hurdles to overcome. Once you grasp those, the specific system you're using is a smaller hurdle."

Director Lasseter worked closely with his staff of animators, including supervising animator Peter Docter, and directing animators, Rich Quade and

Ash Brannon. "We tried to give out whole sections of the animation to one person," said Lasseter. "That way they don't do just one separate shot. I would work with each animator to let them know what's needed, how the shot fits into the overall story, and what the important message of each shot is. There are different levels to shots, from something as simple as a character picking up an object, to convincing the audience that Buzz's whole world has fallen apart, and he's given up [which occurs when Buzz finally realizes he's just a toy]."

"Often, an animator might try to put everything he can into a shot, and I'll say, 'No, this one's really quite simple.' Other times, I'll give them a lot of meat, and let them go to town with the shot.

"What's very important to me, though, is that I really try to let the animators come up with a lot of ideas on their own. I give them the constraints of a shot, and let them know what's needed, but don't tell them exactly what to do. I tried to paint into their minds the emotion and environment of the shot, but as to how they do it, that's why we hired them. I wanted all of our artists to have some creative ownership of the film, because I remember how it was when I was working on bigger projects as an animator. I always worked harder, and did much better work, when I felt I had a part in the creativity."

One advantage of computer animation is the way it allows movement to be layered onto a scene. On a complex model, like Woody or Buzz, there could be over 100 controls, just for their facial expressions. That means it would be very difficult for the animator to move every control needed, during each separate frame of film, and then be locked into that movement, unable to return to it (as is the case in stop-motion). Here, multiple passes can easily be made on every scene, so the animator can return and add movements to different body parts, each time further refining the motions.

"If Woody's lying on the ground, and he gets up," said Docter, "I'd start animating

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TOY STORY

VOICES

Voice talents and star names defined the roles.

By Lawrence French

To voice Woody, the cowboy doll in TOY STORY, director John Lasseter knew exactly whom he wanted: Tom Hanks. To help get Hanks interested in the part, Lasseter did an animation test of Woody, matching it to Hanks' voice from the soundtrack of TURNER & HOOD. "That made a clear impression on Tom," revealed Tom Schumacher, vice-president of Disney feature animation. "It gave Tom an idea of how the character would look and behave. Moreover, it's fun for actors to see how their voice is transformed into a character."

According to Lasseter, Hanks brought a great deal more to the part than just his voice. "We videotaped all the actors," said Lasseter, "so when the animators started to work on the scenes, they could look at how the actors moved and saw all their different facial expres-

sions. At first the actors wondered, 'Why is this camera here?' Then, when they understood it would be used as reference by the animators, they started doing all sorts of interesting movements. Tom Hanks was especially good at acting everything out. I think you can really see a lot of Tom Hanks' performance in the animation of Woody."

Since most of the actors hadn't done any previous voice-over work, it was something of a challenge to be acting in a recording studio. "They're used to being on a set, in costume, with other actors to interact with," noted Lasseter. "Here, they have to come in, stand in front of a music stand, look at their script, which is stapled to cardboard so it doesn't make any noise, and start acting to a microphone. Meanwhile a bunch of people are sitting behind a glass window, staring at them."

In directing the actors, Las-



Tim Allen (inset) initially recorded his voice tracks as Buzz together with Hanks to develop the interplay.



Tom Hanks (inset) was videotaped recording the voice for Woody, used as a reference guide for animators.

setter allowed them a great deal of leeway and encouraged improvisations. "I tried to tell the actors what the emotion and environment of the scene was, and then let them do it their own way. I never said to Tom Hanks, 'Read the scene like this.' I'd say, 'You're in the back of a moving truck, it's really noisy out, all these other toys are trying to get you, and you're trying to tell Buzz that everything is okay.' You just paint a picture of the scene, to help them act it out."

To get the actors accustomed to their characters, Disney suggested they be given props to use during the recording sessions. "We got Tom a cowboy hat, and various other props, which really helped him get into Woody's character," recalled producer Bonnie Arnold.

For one scene, Woody is in Sid's room, looking out the window at the other toys, who are across the way in Andy's room. Buzz has just broken his arm off, while attempting to fly. Woody is trying to prove to the other toys that Buzz is still alive, so he takes Buzz's severed arm, and does a pantomime with it. "It's a very funny scene," said Lasseter, "and in order to get some ad-libbing, we gave Tom an arm to use. My son has this fake arm you can put in doors, so it looks like somebody's arm is caught in the doorway. We gave that to Tom and he was just amazing. He started doing this little puppet show, acting like Buzz Lightyear. Then he took the arm and started reading its palm, and used it to massage his

back. It was very funny, so whenever we recorded Tom, we always made sure to bring in props, because he was great at acting out the scenes."

Initially, two sessions were done with Tom Hanks and Tim Allen recording their voices together, but it proved to be somewhat impractical. "We found it was really more efficient to record the actors separately," said Lasseter. "It was fruitful for us to hear them together at the beginning, because we could see how they interacted with each other, but it was just insane trying to schedule everybody. We tried to be flexible where we recorded them, so we went all over the place. Tim Allen lives in Detroit, so we went there. We did Wally Shawn in New York, and Tom Hanks mostly in Los Angeles. All the actors really enjoyed doing it."

Having the actors interested is helpful, because they won't be getting their usual paycheck. Tom Hanks, for instance, now receives upwards of \$15 million, after winning back to back Oscars. "The actors tend to do these films," said Schumacher, "because it's fun for them, especially if they have families. There are so few of these movies being made, it really gives them a chance to see how the whole animation process works. We don't sell these movies on star names, so we never cast someone just for their celebrity. We cast actors for what they're going to bring to the vocal performance, and if their voice doesn't match the character, we won't use them." □

TOY STORY

ART DIRECTION

CGI problems found solutions in the sketches of designer Ralph Eggleston.

By Lawrence French

To create a world where toys come to life, director John Lasseter wanted settings that were caricatures, but very realistic caricatures. "I knew that we could produce settings that looked absolutely real," said Lasseter, "but I didn't want the audience to think it was a real world. I want the audience to say, 'I know this isn't real, but my gosh, it looks real.' It was very important that this be a caricature of reality."

To accomplish that task, Lasseter selected Ralph Eggleston, who was art director and color stylist on *FERNGULLY, THE LAST RAINFOREST*. "I picked Ralph because he had a really great color sense," commented Lasseter. "Although he had never done computer animation before, he had the ability to make the designs dimensional. A lot of people design things purely in 2-D, and you couldn't take their drawings and make it work in 3-D."

Eggleston did a pastel color sketch for many scenes in the film, as well as a color chart that was used to coordinate the different color schemes for the 29 major sequences of the movie. "After I read the script, I felt there were two big sequences that everything hinged around," said Eggleston. "First, when Woody gets jealous and tries to push Buzz behind the desk, but inadvertently pushes him out of the window. Secondly, after they've gone through hell to-



Buzz and Woody become friends in the end, staring up at the sky, production design sketch by art director Ralph Eggleston.

gether, and have a reconciliation."

"When Buzz falls out of the window, there's this bright orange light coming in that's really dramatic," explained Lasseter, "then it goes dark, and stays that way until they have their resolution. It's overcast and stormy, and the sun doesn't really come out again until they come to grips with who they are. Then for the ending chase scene, we have a bright sunny day."

Once those two scenes were established as key focal points, Eggleston began work on the contrasting styles of Andy's and Sid's bedrooms. "For Andy's house," explained Eggleston, "we didn't want anything too whacked out, but something very homey. We figured his mother is divorced; she's from

the Midwest, and we thought she'd probably have a mix of leftover furniture from her mother's attic. Then, in Andy's room, we wanted a comfortable setting for the characters. The predominate color is blue, and it's very inviting and cozy. There's no black shadows, and everything is very pastel.

"We have a very stylized opening, where we start with the Disney logo, that fades away into the blue sky filled with white clouds, and we pan down from the clouds to this western town. Then, all of a sudden this big foot comes right into the foreground. We're in the fantasyland of Andy's imagination. All the western buildings are made of boxes, which change into kid's drawings, and we pull back to reveal Andy playing with Woody in his bedroom, where everything has a western theme. The wallpaper in his room is blue with clouds on it, and the bedspread has a cowboy motif. We made it a little like the beginning of Sergio Leone's *THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY*. We have shadows from the clouds moving over the buildings, and we go right up into Woody's eyes."

Of course, Andy's room doesn't stay in a western theme very long, for as soon as Buzz Lightyear arrives everything in the bedroom metamorphoses from the old West into a futuristic space theme.

Sid's room, in stark contrast to Andy's, is akin to a torture chamber, with a musty, scary feeling to it. "Sid's whole home



Woody tries to lay down the law to Buzz, the new toy on the block.

is like good housekeeping from hell," laughed Eggleston. "The mutant toys live in Sid's room and they look very scary at first, but they help Woody out in the end. We put in a rusty old bed frame with barbed wire wrapped around it, a black light poster, a waffle iron with a melted doll's head on it, and avocado green carpeting. I actually use the carpeting from the hotel in *THE SHINING*, where the little boy is riding his tricycle outside the room where the murders have been committed."

Other films that influenced Eggleston include classic film noir thrillers, such as *THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE*, and *MILDRED PIERCE*. "We used mostly awkward angles in making Sid's house," noted Eggleston. "The idea was that Sid's Dad is the handyman from hell,

The film turns somber after Woody accidentally pushes Buzz out of the window. Below: Designing the outside world, seen from a car.



CARTOON SURREALISM

“The design takes elements from reality and makes them into a heightened reality,” said Eggleston. “I didn’t want to make it photo realistic. It looks better than real.”



Left: Eggleston's concept sketch of Andy's favorite fast food place.



and everything looks very poorly built, like the rooms have been haphazardly added on. We have really bad paneling, stucco ceilings, and we used tilted angles and wide-angle lenses to give it a creepy feeling.”

Eggleston had to tread a fine line between making the settings too realistic and too cartoony. “One of John’s theories,” explained Eggleston, “is that we don’t want to have the toys doing things that they weren’t physically capable of doing. Their eyes don’t pop out, like

Roger Rabbit, because it’s physically impossible—they’re made of plastic. We were very careful about how far we pushed things. In designing the houses, we did things like making the door-knobs bigger, the baseboards higher, and the doorways narrower, but nothing too obvious. It was taking elements from reality and making them into a heightened reality, because I didn’t want to make it photo-realistic. I think it looks better than real. Bill Joyce, who did some early illustrations for the film, said, ‘It doesn’t look like we made it, but like you dreamt it.’ I thought that was a huge compliment.”

Eggleston came on the film fairly late in pre-production, right after Disney approved the script. Along with designers Bob Pauly and Bill Cone—and

painters Tia Kratter and Robin Cooper, the art department began to pull the look of the film together. “We had to really hit the ground running,” said Eggleston. “At first, I looked at some drawings that had already been done on the film by children’s book illustrators. Then, John cited the Maxfield Parrish look that he liked, with saturated colors and really strong contrasts. Next, we sat down and did these model packets, where we made drawings and descriptions to scale of every object in the film. Shoes, chairs, desks, a mini-van, lamps, every little thing. I didn’t pay too much attention to the storyboards that had already been done. My goal was to do what I wanted, from reading the script and talking with John. Then, if John liked the way I was going, we could meld it in with the storyboards.”

A scene where Buzz and Woody follow Andy to his favorite fast-food restaurant, Pizza Planet, results in them ending up as prizes in a crane-game, where they are won by Sid. “Originally, Pizza Planet was going to be Pizza Put,” revealed Eggleston. “There was a whole sequence that had been designed and boarded, where they went to an

arcade with a miniature golf course, and there was a miniature train going around the place, but we couldn’t use the name Pizza Put. So we changed it to Pizza Planet, and made it like a ’50s drive-in restaurant with this big rocket on the outside. It actually worked better, because Buzz was looking for a rocket so he could get back to his home planet. Bill Cone helped design Pizza Planet, and now they’re planning to build one at Walt Disney World in Florida.”

Eggleston summed up his work on the film by saying, “To me, the art direction has got to support the story. It’s got to set the mood of the scene with color and lighting. We worked very hard to create this world, and for the two pivotal scenes we got exactly what we wanted. The lighting was really superb. It’s like painting with lights. For certain shots we had up to 30 different lights. There was a lot of give and take, and in the end we generally hit the mark.” □



Woody rescues Buzz from the bleak world of Sid's room. Right: color contrasts, Eggleston's sunny design scheme for Andy's room.



TOY STORY

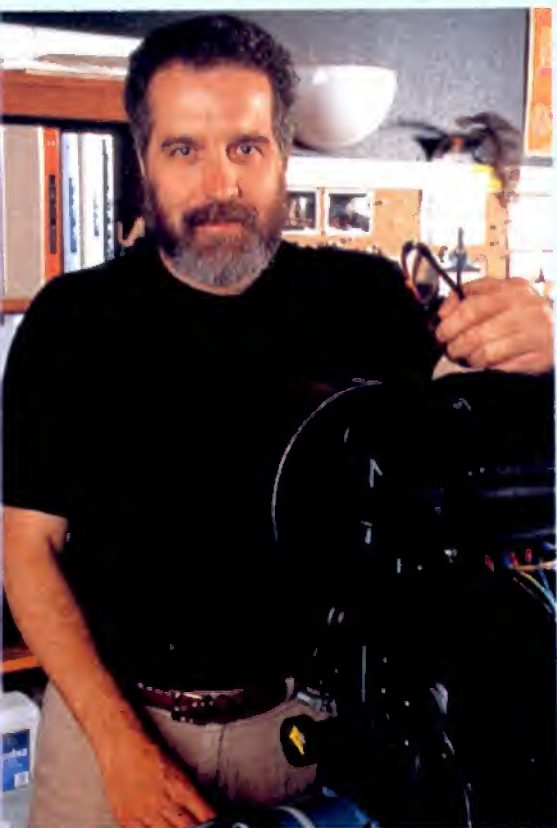
SCANNING

Transferring the images from video to film stock.

By Lawrence French

Since TOY STORY has been created entirely in the computer, getting the final images onto celluloid required a painstaking transfer process, wherein the digital images from the computer are converted onto 35mm film. Overseeing this process is David DiFrancesco, who won a technical achievement Academy Award for his "pioneering work in film input scanning, used for special visual effects." DiFrancesco built his first laser scanner at Lucasfilm, where it was used to scan the CGI stained glass knight sequence in YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES directly onto the live action background plate. However, laser scanning was not em-

Pixar's David DiFrancesco, scientific Academy Award recipient for his work on film scanning.



ployed for TOY STORY, since it would have required ten megabytes of data for each individual frame of film to be scanned.

"The laser is used for real high-end work, like effects," said DiFrancesco. "It was just too high resolution to use on TOY STORY. It would require several terabytes of data to do the whole picture that way, so we're using commercial grade film recorders instead [MGI Cine 2's]. We've made certain modifications to them, so they're tailored to our specific needs on TOY STORY."

"The film recorder is basically a high resolution black and white TV monitor [or CRT, for cathode ray tube], with a custom, pin-registered animation camera facing it," explained technician Darwyn Peachey. "The film recorder has a filter wheel, with a red, green and blue filter. To get a color picture, the recorder takes three separate exposures from the b&w CRT, corresponding to the three primary colors, before advancing to the next frame."

This process is somewhat similar to the early dye-transfer Technicolor process, where a red, green and blue separation negative were combined, one after another, on top of the final b&w film print. The results were the spectacularly vibrant colors, seen in such films as THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (1940) and BLACK NARCIS-SUS (1947).

Significantly, Walt Disney was the first producer to embrace 3-strip Technicolor, using it for the first time on the car-



Three stages of Pixar's computer image generation: rough polys and wire frame layout (top); the full "pat" stage (middle), with full models and ambient lighting and shading; the final shot, with full background detail and lighting.

toon, FLOWERS & TREES (1932), and subsequently using it on all his animation features.

One of the problems involved in transferring CGI to film is accounting for the color variations between film and video. "During production, we're working mostly from computer monitors," said Bill Reeves. "We're rarely seeing the images on film. So, we have

five or six extremely high-resolution monitors, that have better color and picture quality. We put those in general work areas, so people can go and see how their work looks. Then, when we record, we try to calibrate to the film stock, so the image we have on the monitor looks the same as what we'll get on film. Of course, film responds one way, and video responds another

DIGITAL TO CELLULOID

“During production we work from video monitors,” said technical director Bill Reeves. “We rarely see the images on film. We try to calibrate to the film stock.”

er way, so you have to adjust and tweak, until you get the best image you can, but they never really meet perfectly.”

“John [Lasseter] had to learn over time the relationship between film and video,” said Peachey. “Then he could correct for the differences, and get the best contrasts and color range possible in the final transfer. It takes a fair amount of fine tuning, which is specific to the particular film recorder you’re using.”

As a result, Lasseter and art director Ralph Eggleston did tests to determine how various colors would react on film, as opposed to video. “We had to learn that early on,” said Eggleston. “Greens go dark really fast, while the reds stay pretty true. Blues have to be less saturated, to look fully saturated on film, while the oranges look really bad on computer screens, but look really great on film.”

It takes the film recorder approximately 50 seconds to record a single frame of film, meaning that after nine hours, it will have transferred only 30 seconds of finished film! Consequently, three recorders were operating 24 hours a day, to produce the final results. “It’s a significant amount of time,” noted Peachey, “so [producer] Ralph Guggenheim is concerned that we get all the computer rendering and compositing done early enough, so it will be ready for the film recorder.”

Interestingly, the film is being rendered in an aspect ratio of 1.66 to 1, so it can be shown uncropped in European cinemas, but in America it will be projected in a 1.85 to 1 ratio, meaning some of the top and bottom of the image will be lost. “We do all the work in 1.66,” said Reeves, “but we have to remember that it’s going to be cropped for 1.85. That means we have to keep the characters in the main action area. Some-

times if a character gets too high in a scene, you’ll get his head cropped off. To deal with that, we have guidelines, designed into the computer, which come up and show us the safe action area. Sometimes we forget, and we’ve had several shots that had to be redone, because they were out of the 1.85 frame area.”

For future films, a wide screen CinemaScope ratio of 2.35 to 1, could be easily obtained by a program built into the computer. “I could change the system for scope in about five minutes,” said Reeves. “We can also change the pixel shape. In video, the pixels aren’t actually square, like they are on film, so we change them for video to make them square, and more squished together. The computer takes all those things into account and really makes it quite easy.”

Another exciting research project being done by DiFrancesco, is a computer program that will correct color fading in Eastman color films. When 3-strip Technicolor was largely abandoned in the fifties, the unstable color dyes used in the cheaper Eastman color process would eventually fade, making color films turn red as quickly as five years after they were made. “I came up with an algorithm to correct color fading,” said DiFrancesco. “Now we can identify the correct colors, in both negative and print motion picture film, do the calculations on it, and bring it back to its normal state.”

Clearly, this process will be a boon to film restoration projects, when it becomes commercially available. One only had to look at such recent film restorations as *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, *SPARTACUS* and *MY FAIR LADY*, all of which had major color fading problems, to see how valuable this new program will be for film preservation. □



Dr. William T. Reeves, Pixar's supervising technical director, works on digitally encoding the facial features of Woody, sculpted first as a maquette.

with his body, the basic position it's in, and make him get up and turn. I'd do his arms at the same time, because they're interconnected with the body movement. Then layered onto that, I'd go back and do the legs, and lock them down. I can keep going back to try different things, and if it doesn't work, I can always stay with the first version. That's why thumbnail drawings are important, because if you know exactly what you want to do from the start, you can build it up, and not be overwhelmed.”

While computer animation allows you to change one specific element, while keeping everything else exactly the same, it's an advantage that could easily become a problem. “The temptation can sometimes be great to go back and re-do things,” noted Darwyn Peachey. “You have to know where to stop. Otherwise, the film could go on forever.”

Normally, Docter will try to get as much movement as possible through broad pantomime, before adding the face to the character. “Then, when the body is working really well,” said Docter, “I'll go back and put on the face. We have controls for the face, that make it do whatever you want. If I want Woody to smile, I just turn up the smile control. We have a sneer control, and many others, that basically control all the different muscles in the face. The lip control allows me to pucker it, curl it, or make it do anything else I need.”

When working on a master shot, Docter can easily call up

different angles of Woody's face, and animate his facial expressions in close-up. When the facial movement is completed, it is locked in, and the computer will play it back exactly the way it was animated, for the long shot. “That really helps us to do lip sync,” notes Docter.

All 27 animators had shots to do involving Woody and Buzz, which meant that establishing movements that defined each character had to be worked out. “After that, any one can jump in and animate the character,” said Docter. “We also have dailies every morning, so everyone can make comments on the character's performance, while the shot is still in progress. We've had scenes where Buzz might do something out of character, and John will say, ‘I don't think Buzz would act that way.’ He'd do it more like this,” and John would act it all out. That really helps the animator crystallize, in his mind, what John wants to see in the performance.”

Once the animation is complete, the scenes are lit and shaded and painters apply dirt, grime and other details to both settings and characters. “The traditional knock against computer graphics is that everything looks plastic,” noted Tom Porter, head shading programmer. “That's because if you don't spend any time in giving the surfaces shadings and textures, as well as wear and tear, everything will look unnaturally clean. So, we spend a lot of time giving all the settings and the characters realistic looks and feels.”

TOY STORY

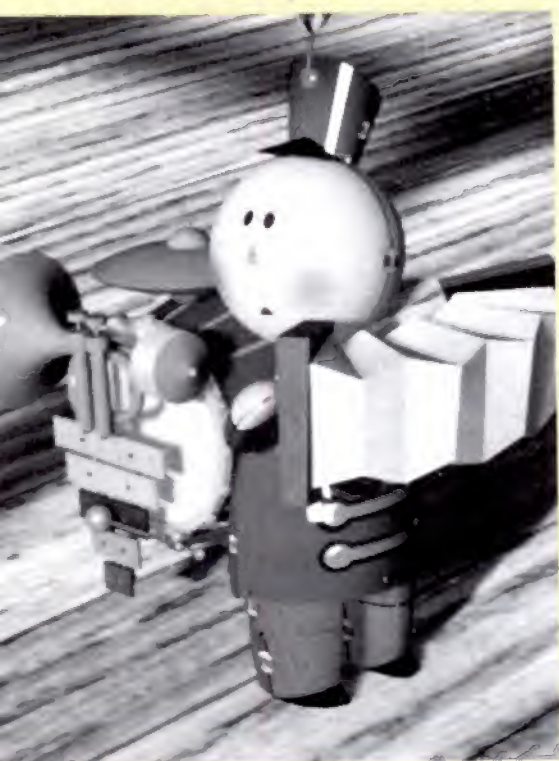
BEGINNINGS

An animation brain trust devised the toys' story.

By Lawrence French

To come up with a story idea to pitch to Disney's chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg, (who has since formed his own company, DreamWorks), TOY STORY director John Lasseter brainstormed ideas with storyboard artists Andrew Stanton and Joe Ranft, as well as supervising animator Pete Docter. "It was the four of us sitting in a room, just hashing it all out," said Stanton. "We had a little list of things that we didn't want the film to be. We didn't want a musical, we didn't want a villain, we didn't want a love story, and we didn't want a fairytale. It wasn't that those things were bad, it's just that we felt we could make a film that was different and didn't use all the typical Dis-

Ideas for the film originated around making Tinny, the star of TIN TOY the new toy main character.



ney story elements. It was very much an internal agenda of our own."

Since Lasseter's short films had mostly dealt with bringing inanimate objects to life, he and his co-authors came up with the idea of a buddy picture, using toys. "We looked at a number of great buddy pictures," said Lasseter, "like THE DEFIANT ONES, MIDNIGHT RUN, THE ODD COUPLE, and 48 HOURS. We realized that this was something that no one had really done in animation before. We felt it had a lot of potential, in terms of making a strong character film. That was important, because the number one goal we had was to make it a character film. We wanted characters that had lots of layers to them. That was what we enjoyed doing the most in all our short films."

For their initial story pitch, Pixar thought of using a classic Charlie McCarthy type ventriloquist dummy, and Tinny, the musical wind-up toy from TIN TOY, as the two opposite characters who would be thrown together. "The idea was that the dummy was to be the toy that this little boy had for a long time," said Lasseter. "It was a hand-me-down from his father, and then on his birthday he gets Tinny as a new toy. Tinny becomes his favorite toy, and the dummy gets really mad and upset about being replaced."

"The problem was that Tinny is really an old-style toy. It was hard to make it believable that Tinny was this new toy, coming in to replace the dummy. So we



Idea Men: director John Lasseter (l), board artists Joe Ranft and Andrew Stanton, and supervising animator Pete Docter (r) brainstormed the script.

started to analyze what a little boy would get nowadays, that would get him so excited, that he would stop playing with everything else. I have four boys, so it wasn't too hard for me to imagine. It's basically an action figure, and a space superhero seemed to be a natural. It's kind of a combination of G.I. Joe and STAR WARS, and all the things that influenced us when we were younger."

The next problem that faced the story staff was that the ventriloquist dummy no longer worked with a space action figure. "If you look at the essence of a buddy picture," said Lasseter, "you have two characters as opposite as you can get. So we thought what would be the most extreme opposite of a space superhero? Bud Luckey, one of our animators, came up with the idea of a cowboy doll. We all thought that was perfect. It's definitely not a new toy. No kids get cowboy dolls these days. It really had a sense that the doll had been around for a long time. Originally, we actually made it as a cowboy ventriloquist dummy, but we discovered that it looked a little awkward to have the mouth moving the way a ventriloquist's dummy does."

Lasseter and his story staff checked out some of the current action figures on the toy market. "We found that one of the common features on them," said Lasseter, "was they all had

these voice samplers, where you push a button and all these different voice messages come out. Well, what's the older style of that? A pull-string doll. When I grew up, I had a Casper the Friendly Ghost pull-string doll that I fell asleep with every night. So we felt that would be perfect for our cowboy character, because you'd have this cheesy sounding, scratchy old voice coming out of it."

With the two main types of toy characters set, the story staff began searching for appropriate names for the characters. "We considered Lunar Larry and much sillier names," remembered Lasseter. "Then after much experimentation, we came up with Buzz Lightyear. We were thinking of all these things in outer space, and lightyear came up, and then we thought of astronaut Buzz Aldrin. As soon as we said that, we knew we had nailed it. It was such a perfect name for him, and so much of his personality grew out of that name."

After he had found his new main characters, Lasseter was elated at the thought of throwing them together. "It would be like Roy Rogers meets Buck Rogers," exclaimed the director. "It would be something people hadn't seen before. I enjoy taking something that people are familiar with, and then making them look at it in a new way." □

ROUGHING UP THE EDGES

“We take what’s clean and perfect and mess it up,” said Kratter. “We make the rooms look as though they are lived-in. We have a whole program called ‘filth.’”

This kind of intentional addition of dirt can be contrasted to the sort of lavish art deco sets Hollywood used to make in the '30s, which always looked quite beautiful, but were devoid of any signs of actual usage. “We take what’s clean and perfect and mess it up,” laughed Tia Kratter, Pixar’s lead CG painter. We make the rooms look as though they’ve been lived in. We add scratches to the walls, smudges on the floor, stains to the carpets, and I even did a pee stain on Sid’s bed. We have a whole directory, called filth, which we really went to town on, for Sid’s room. It’s filled with blotches, drips, brush marks, holes, sprays, and water marks.”

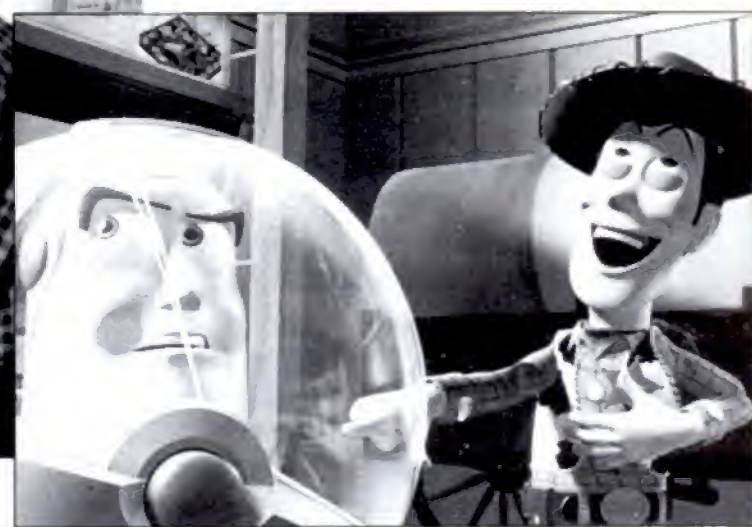
One of the problems facing the painters was how to get spots and textures on a 3-D object. It’s fairly simple to paint onto flats objects, like walls or floors, but for characters that move, like Scud, Sid’s toy-eating pit bull, it was a much greater challenge. Tom Hahn, who helped develop the CAPS system, came up with a program which allowed the painters to wrap their paintings around (or map them on) all the 3-D models and objects in the film.

“It was very difficult for us,” said Kratter, “because it’s very mechanical, and very analytical. You have to make very minor changes, and it’s very repetitive. We had 29 separate views of Scud, and that was a real job, since we had to put thousands of tiny little hair strands on him. We had to paint as close as we could, to individual strands. Then once that’s done, it’s locked onto him, and when he runs, or rolls over, it will all stick to him and become part of his body.”

Obviously this kind of painstaking detail could easily go undetected in shots that last no longer than 10 or 15 seconds. It’s somewhat akin to the famed silent director, Erich Von Stroheim, having the actors who played the palace guards in *MERRY-GO-ROUND* wear monogrammed silk underwear, even though the camera would never see it. As computer graphics pioneer Robert Abel has noted, “Even if you don’t



Head CG painter Tia Kratter, adding surface detail to Buzz and Woody. Inset: Woody laughs—Buzz doesn’t realize he’s a toy.



see all the details, you can sense them. That’s what makes great computer graphics.”

Lighting, extremely important to Lasseter, was used to enhance the mood of the film, as well as underline the dramatic focus of the scenes. “Lighting is such an emotional thing,” stated Lasseter. “When I began thinking about the lighting style, I felt the color of the light would be important. I wanted to get an emotional feeling out of the lighting, like what happens in a Maxfield Parrish painting. He uses all these warm colors, contrasting them with purple-blue shadows, and there’s a richness you get that I really love.”

Lasseter also wanted to use music to reinforce the emotions of the scenes, and asked Randy Newman to not only score the film, but provide songs as well. “We never thought of the film as a musical,” said Lasseter, “but at the beginning Disney sort of assumed that it was. We talked about it, and to their credit they were willing to try something else. Now, we have a cohesive song score, where Randy sings his own songs,

which are written about what’s going on in the scenes. We use it like the Simon & Garfunkle songs in *THE GRADUATE*, or Cat Stevens songs in *HAROLD & MAUDE*.”

Lasseter felt Randy Newman had the right sensibility for the songs and music, due to both his satirical side, as well as his emotional side. “It was important, because of the emotion I wanted the music to convey,” commented Lasseter. “I didn’t want it to be sentimental, but a score that gets your emotions rising, like in *THE NATURAL* or *AWAKENINGS*. Although we’re using a new technology in making the movie, in many aspects this is a very traditional film. People often tend to put a synthesized score to computer graphics, but I wanted to have a traditional orchestral score, with a rich, full sound to it.”

“In a way, when Disney agreed to make *TOY STORY*, it was an experiment, since no studio has ever made a full-length CGI feature,” remarked Catmull. “Disney said, ‘Let’s try it, and if it doesn’t work, we may lose a little money,’ re-

marked Catmull. “Right now, all the other studio’s are trying to duplicate Disney’s success with traditional animation. *TOY STORY* is turning out very successfully, and when the film comes out, I think there’s going to be a great rush to do computer animation. Now that we’ve done this one, we’re already cheaper than traditional animation. We have a crew of 110 people, vs. the 500 or more on a 2-D feature. This is our first film, and I think it looks beautiful, but because all of the technology is brand-new, it will be the worst film that we’ll ever

make.”

However, a ground-breaking first film is very often very difficult to exceed. After all, *SNOW WHITE*, *FANTASIA* and *PINOCCHIO* set standards so high, that Walt Disney himself found it difficult to surpass them. Joe Ranft, who has worked for 10 years on Disney’s 2-D animated films noted, “I found the energy and enthusiasm generated by *TOY STORY* in a class by itself. Once you’ve made a big success, there’s a certain plateau you reach. This was like Pixar’s *ROCKY*, because it was a small studio, doing their first film. A whole group of people had a real high level of excitement, because everything was so fresh and new. It was a great feeling to kick into that.”

Peter Schneider, Disney’s head of animation reflected on one of the key legacies handed down by Walt Disney. “Tell a great story, tell it with strong characters, and always push the technological barriers.” With the help of Pixar, on November 22nd, Disney animation will once again be doing just that. □

CAPTAIN ZOOM

STARZ! cable's quirky '50s sci-fi parody heads for TV syndication in November.

By *Kenneth Winikoff*

It was an idea that had been tumbling around in Brian Levant's head for a few years. A TV superhero is reluctantly dispatched to a foreign galaxy to help rebels overthrow an evil tyrant. Levant, who cut his teeth writing for such shows as *HAPPY DAYS*, *MORK AND MINDY* and *THE NEW LEAVE IT TO BEAVER*, had proved his mettle as director of the big-budget feature *THE FLINTSTONES*. And he had a definite look in mind. So when he got the call from Elizabeth Glass, the head of programming at the STARZ! cable network, the Chicago native jumped and *THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN ZOOM IN OUTER SPACE* was born.

Levant served as story writer and executive producer on the two-hour *CAPTAIN ZOOM* movie, the first original program for Encore's STARZ! cable network. After its August 17 airing on the pay cable channel, *CAPTAIN ZOOM* will blast off into syndication across North America as part of MCA-TV's Action Pack lineup in November/December. Levant believes that if viewers take a shine to his reluctant hero, Captain Zoom could become a long-lasting franchise to rival the fabled Flash Gordon adventures of a bygone era.

"When I was a kid growing up in Chicago, WGN used to broadcast *FLASH GORDON* episodes on Saturday mornings," said the excitable Levant, who tends to punctuate his sentences with hearty laughter. *CAPTAIN ZOOM*, he said, "is an homage to Alex Rayburn's creation. But it's really my take."

But where Flash Gordon was a space traveller of heroic proportions, Levant's Captain Zoom is a hero only to his legions



Executive producer Brian Levant in the captain's chair on the set in Vancouver, the *FLINTSTONES* director recycling childhood memories of '50s *SPACE PATROL*.

of kiddie fans. His alter ego, football player-turned-children's show host-cum-TV pitchman Ty Farrell is, in fact, a pompous, vain man mesmerized by his own delusions of grandeur.

"He's not Buster Crabbe," guffawed Levant, whose anecdotes of life on the TV sitcom set with the likes of Ron Howard, Robin Williams and Garry Marshall would fill a book. The story, by Levant with co-credits to Rick Copp and David Goodman, is a tip of the hat to the Happy Days of '50s live TV *a la* *SPACE PATROL* and *CAPTAIN VIDEO*.

Farrell, a stage actor just past his prime, finishes off his nemesis of the week, an overly exaggerated Lizard King, in time to

espouse the wonders of the sponsor, Chocko-Socko syrup, to his legions of pre-pubescent fans. Meanwhile, 400 light years away on the planet Pangea, the beautiful Tyra (Liz Vassey), leader of a ragtag band of rebels, has fallen into a trap set by the evil Lord Vox (Ron Perlman), a warrior bent on conquering the entire universe. As hope fades, Tyra's younger brother Baley (Gregory Smith) fumbles with the dials of his homemade transmitter, desperately trying to send out an intergalactic SOS. Is there someone out in the cosmos brave enough to respond? It seems not. Suddenly, Baley hones in on the fuzzy image of Zoom battling to the death with the actor in the rubber lizard suit. Bingo. In a puff of smoke, Farrell is whisked away on a transporter beam from his New York TV studio to Pangea, where he is forced to play the role of his life.

Although ostensibly a science-fiction drama, *CAPTAIN ZOOM* is played strictly for fun. In Levant's fertile imagination, the black-and-white televised images of the cardboard sets that kept him in awe during his youth of the '50s melded with the real-life images of big-fin cars and metal, metal everywhere. The result is a stunning look that touches everything from evil Lord Vox's black cape and Fu Manchu fingernails to the *CAPTAIN VIDEO*-inspired spaceships and ray guns.

"We really wanted it to look different from what's on the air now," enthused Levant. "My son had a book on cars that never made it to production. That unlocked the design door for us—the future as it was seen in the past." Richard Garcia (*STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*) and Chaz Butcher, with whom Levant had worked on *THE FLINTSTONES*, were brought in to design the sets, costumes and space para-



Zoom is seized by Lord Vox's soldiers (above), sumptuous design by Richard Garcia and Chaz Butcher, circa 1953. Inset: Ron Perlman as Vox. Right: Dan Riordan as Zoom, a TV kid's show host who gets drafted for interstellar battle, the pilot show of a proposed series.

phernalia that would recreate the vision of the future, circa 1953.

When it came to casting, Levant also had some definite ideas on where to go. For the lead, he opted for a relative unknown, Daniel Riordan (ED WOOD, MY BLUE HEAVEN). Riordan, a science fiction fan whose credits included STAR TREK'S DEEP SPACE NINE and NEXT GENERATION, was familiar with the cheesy sets of low-budget sci-fi, spending hours watching PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE to prepare himself for the role of Wood's stable actor Jeffrey Woolcott in Tim Burton's ED WOOD.

"We had to watch the reels over and over again," he said. "But that style of acting from the mid-50s, the bravado, was exactly what we needed for the TV sequences." An actor whose 20-year career runs the gamut from the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival to the feature ELECTRIC BOOGALOO, the Bay Area native said he knew just how to play the role of narcissistic TV star Ty Farrell.

"He's an anti-hero who, by default, fumbles his way into success. That journey represents a lot of things about our perceptions in America as to who our heroes are." Yet Riordan knew he had to avoid playing for too much pathos. "There seems to be a lot of seriousness about science fiction," he said. "The laughs are really at his [Captain Zoom's] expense. At the same time this guy is lovable. What is going on in this guy's life that

makes him such an asshole? I have a philosophy of life that states everybody's ability to be unlikeable is a direct result of how insecure they are."

One sheer stroke of brilliance—and sheer luck—was that the filmmakers managed to snare STAR TREK veteran Nichelle Nichols for the role of Sagan, the all-knowing mystic whose gentle wisdom provides a flame of hope for the rebels when things seem darkest.

At first, Nichols, who spent more than a quarter of a century in the role of Lt. Uhura on TV and the big screen, had no interest whatsoever in taking on a role that would have her head in outer space once again. "When I heard it was a sci-fi film, I said 'No thanks.'" At the time Nichols, who started her career as a singer with the Duke Ellington band, was busy working on a new concert, her first novel, and was writing a speech for commencement exercises at

Marywood College in Scranton, Pa., where she was to receive an honorary doctorate. "I have nothing against science fiction but I did the best science fiction show on the planet."

But the producers didn't want to take no for an answer. Nichols was cajoled by her manager into reading the script. To her surprise, "The role of Sagan was so good. Sagan is the glue and the chronicler. She is the one who knows. She is steeped in the ancients. And she could be 50 or 500." So Nichols agreed to take the role. "In this business you say, 'Never say never.'"

Levant, meanwhile, joked that he pushed hard for Nichols to come on board because "I really wanted to hear her say 'Yes, Captain' one more time."

Ron Perlman (BEAUTY AND THE BEAST) was tapped for an over-the-top performance as the sinister Lord Vox and Duane Davis, the son of Green Bay Packer

Willie Davis, who starred as boxer Buster Douglas in HBO's TYSON, appears as Simulus, the muscle behind Tyra's rebel clan.

Another familiar face—though not usually seen in sci-fi—belongs to Tony Dow, the older brother Wally in the original LEAVE IT TO BEAVER, staple of '60s television. Now a successful producer, Dow was behind the remake of IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE for the USA Network and served as co-producer on CAPTAIN ZOOM. He appears briefly in a cameo,

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Zoom and Nichelle Nichols as Sagan set off in search of the Temple of Rea. The show debuts on Universal's Action Pack after its August cable airing.



SCREAMERS

Peter Weller stars in a Philip K. Dick story adapted by way of Dan O'Bannon.

By John Thonen

A lone soldier warily makes his way across desolate alien terrain. The ravages of war are as visible on the man as on the surrounding landscape. Suddenly, an ear-piercing shriek breaks the silence. Apprehension turns to terror on the soldier's face as the ultimate anti-personnel weapon descends on him. In this, his final moment of life, he turns to face the SCREAMERS.

While its title may seem more befitting a horror film, SCREAMERS, which Columbia Pictures opened October 13, is a suspenseful, action-packed, science fiction offering. The film deals with a common science fiction theme; man in conflict with man's own creations—machines.

The story takes place on Planet Sirius B, a world that has been strip-mined by industrial giant, NEB. Over the last decade a war has raged on the planet between the Alliance, a federation of mine workers, and the NEB. The Alliance has at last gained the upper-hand through its development of the Screammers. Named after the high-pitched whine they make just prior to attacking, the Screammers have been created with but a single purpose. To kill. Designed with the ability to repair themselves, to build more of themselves and to even develop more sophisticated versions of themselves, the



Weller as Col. Henderson with Andy Lauer, commanding a handful of Alliance soldiers still alive on Sirius B, a mining planet ravaged by deadly killing machines.

Screamers threaten to go beyond their original mission. Having nearly decimated Sirius B, both the Alliance and the NEB must face the fact that the Screammers may escape the planet and continue their deadly mission on Earth.

While the film promises action and effects on a par with ALIENS, its most promising element may be its unusually distinguished pedigree. The film's story springs from the pen of one of science fiction's literary giants, Philip K. Dick. Dick's concept has been adapted by ALIEN sripter Dan O'Bannon, and finally brought to cinematic life by one of Canada's hottest young directors, Christian Duguay.

O'Bannon first adapted Dick's 1953 short story "Second Variety" 15 years ago, well

before becoming involved in bringing Dick's "I Can Remember It for You Wholesale" to the screen as TOTAL RECALL. Veteran producer Charles Fries bought the rights to O'Bannon's script and has carefully nurtured it over the years, resisting the overtures of other producers, anxious for the rights, as well as the temptation to produce it as a low-budget film, rather than as the action epic he envisioned.

Fries finally found the opportunity to bring the script to fruition when in 1993, he brought it to the attention of Canadian-based Allegro films. The company had already produced several low-budget genre items including SCANNERS II and III, THE AMITYVILLE CURSE and THE PAPERBOY. Partners Tom Berry and Franco Battista were anxious to expand

their horizons to larger-scale fare and were immediately intrigued by O'Bannon's script. They brought it to Duguay, a then up-and-coming director, whom Berry described as an "enormous visual talent." Duguay had recently done the SCANNERS sequels for Allegro as well as the action thriller LIVE WIRE for New Line. Both Berry and Battista felt that his experience with special effects and action, coupled with his visual acumen, made him the perfect choice for the film. But Duguay passed on the script.

"The SCANNERS films had been fun, but I just wasn't sure I wanted to be categorized as a director of a particular genre of film," explained Duguay. "I was asking myself why I wasn't happy with the type of films I had been doing. I think it was that I needed to get back to the root of storytelling. To character-driven shows."

Duguay did just that with two highly acclaimed TV projects, SNOWBOUND, an adaptation of the true story of a young couple, and their infant child, who become stranded in a frigid wilderness, and the four-hour mini-series MILLION DOLLAR BABIES, about the crass commercialization of the first surviving quintuplets. "The chance to work with the wonderful characters and actors in SNOWBOUND and MILLION DOLLAR BABIES made me realize what it was that had been lacking in my earlier

“I wanted to stress how people respond to fear, death and the possibility of no future, combined with Jean Paul Sartre’s weird, dark take on the future,” said Duguay.”



A “screamer,” killing machines that have evolved into a self-replicating organic form, third stage morph designed by makeup artist Adrien Morot.

films,” explained the 38-year-old director. “When the producers came back to me again with SCREAMERS I had a vision of what I wanted to do with it.”

Duguay explained to Berry and Battista that he wanted to combine O’ Bannon’s script which “uses all the known sci-fi parameters” with characters that could “stress how people respond to fear, death and the pos-

sibility of no future.” For Duguay the key was to maintain O’ Bannon’s realization of Dick’s frequent theme of determining who is human and who only appears to be so (Dick himself cited “Second Variety” as his most successful utilization of that theme) along with the tone of the play “Death in the Soul of Jean Paul Sartre,” which the director described as

“a weird dark take on the future, and how a human faces the truth that tomorrow is going to be your very last day.”

After auditioning several writers to rework O’ Bannon’s script, Duguay brought in Miguel Tejada-Flores, a writer-producer with numerous TV movie credits, including work on genre fare such as PSYCHIC and FRIGHT NIGHT II. Peter Weller was attracted to star, based on Duguay’s new take on the material.

Best known for his twin turns in the ROBOCOP costume and his forays into cult-dom in BUCKAROO BANZAI and THE NAKED LUNCH, Weller’s background included training under Lee Strasberg and Elia Kazan and accomplished stage credits. Most recently his directorial debut, PARTNERS, received an Academy Award nomination for best live-action short. Weller also had a reputation for being a demanding, and sometimes troublesome, perfectionist.

“Many people told me that Peter was ‘larger than life’ and could be a problem to work with. It is not true,” Duguay stated emphatically. “All I know is that he fell in love with his character and became an integral part of developing that character. Many actors want to know the background of their role and Peter’s input was fabulous. I gave him his space to work in, he gave me mine, and we both contributed to making the best film we could. Creatively this has been the most satisfying experience I have had in films.”

The film’s complex effects requirements, including the creation of the Screamers, were satisfied by three Canadian suppliers, coordinated for the production by Ernie Farino (THE TERMINATOR). Farino suggested the use of stop-motion for one of the Screamer designs,

envisioned by Deak Ferrand of Toronto’s Buzz F/X. “It’s a kind of ecto-skeleton-reptilian-lizard-crustacean,” said Farino, having a hard time describing the concept.

Added Ed Chiodo, of the L.A.-based Chiodo Bros, brought in to realize the design, “It’s a kind of Gigeresque-lobster-centipede thing with claws meets a power tool. It’s got 32 legs on a lobster-shaped tail, these talon, claw-like things on bone arms, a spinning circular saw blade in it’s torso and a smaller one in the mouth area.”

While dimensional animation is often cited as being on its death bed since JURASSIC PARK, producer Battista turned out to be a life-long fan of the craft and jumped at the chance to utilize it in the film. The Chiodo brothers studio took on the task of achieving 18 animated blue-screen shots that would later be computer-composited into the final film.

To realize the time-consuming animation chore the Chio-

Weller rehearses with Canadian director Christian Duguay, filming on frigid Montreal locations.

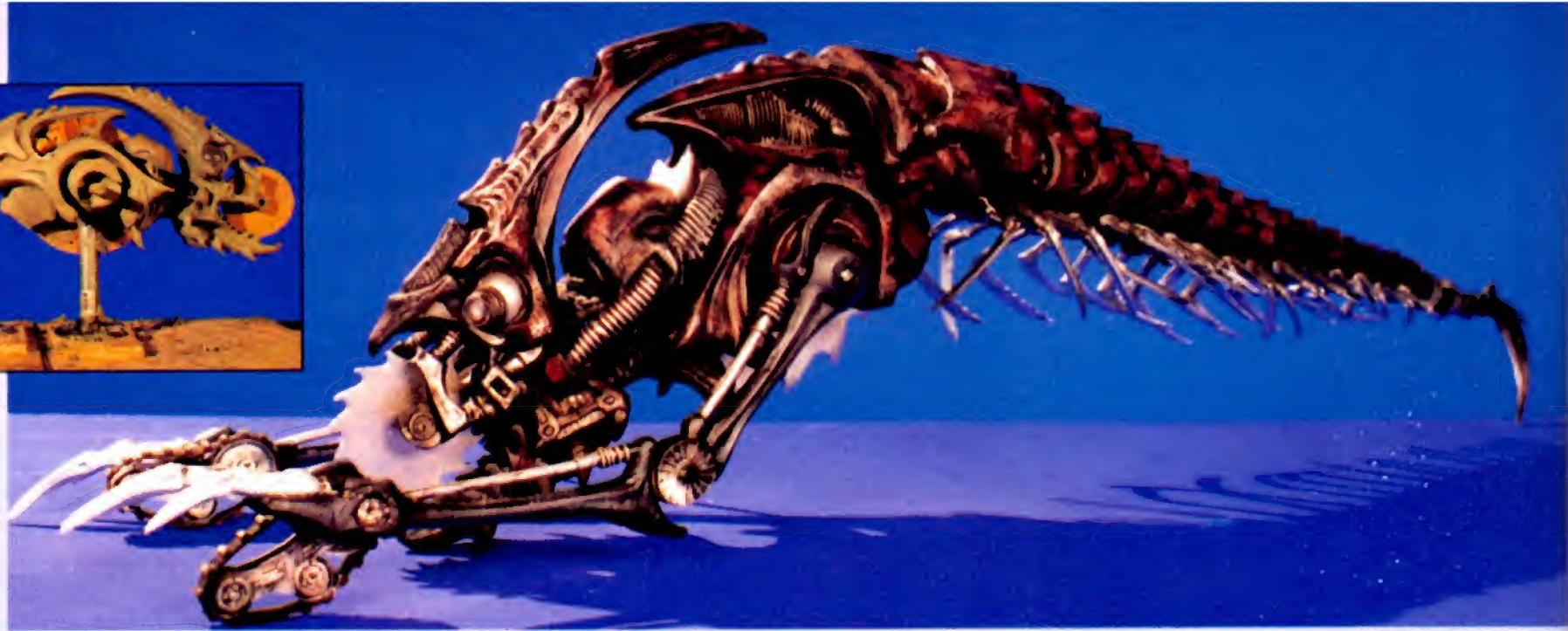


The EEV one man escape pod that serves as Weller’s only ticket off Sirius B, once the planet has been overrun, CGI by Yanick Desseault of Buzz Image.





The finished design of the burrowing mechanical killers of Sirius B, and the model being sculpted by designers at the Chiodo Bros Effects Studios (inset). Both stop-motion and full versions were used.



SCREAMERS EFX

Coordinating stop motion, CGI and mechanicals.

By John Thonen

With SCREAMERS well into pre-production the producers began to become aware of how demanding the film's effects work was going to be. Three separate Canadian effects houses were employed: Buss F/X under the guidance of Richard Ostiguy would handle the over 150 effects shots and 20 matte shots.

Adrien Morot coordinated makeup effects to believably render the ravages of war and a desolate alien locale on the cast, as well as the gory results of Screamer attacks. The film's complicated on-set mechanical and pyrotechnic sequences fell under the guidance of Ryal Cosgrove. To coordinate the work of the three effects vendors, Fries representative Clark Henderson suggested Ernie Farino, who had done similar work on TERMINATOR and THE LADY IN WHITE, as well as making his directorial debut with Fries' STEEL AND LACE.

Farino had just returned from Romania, directing installments of Charles Band's JOSH KIRBY, TIME WARRIOR video series. "I literally still had open suitcases when Clark called and I flew off to the wilds of Canada," said Farino. "I basically tried to organize the work according to their storyboards, shoot the background plates and coordinate the various vendors involved towards the common goal."

While the film's effects are all state-of-the-art Farino described most of the work as "...pretty straight-forward, not

much in the way of break-through technology." One exception is a series of complicated moving matte shots that allow star Peter Weller and fellow cast-mates to move around the ruins of a devastated metropolis that largely wasn't there. "Rick [Ostiguy] came up with software that allowed us to take a carefully set-up dolly move and track it to avoid complicated on-set motion-control equipment," said Farino. "It allowed them to lay in matte paintings of the ruined city and then to allow the characters to move in and out in correct dimension and perspective. It was a real bonus in time and money."

Farino, who largely concentrates on directorial work these days, admitted, "It's pretty daunting to stay up with effects technology today. What I brought to the production was my cumulative experience. I personally may not always have the depth of knowledge and expertise that the vendors do. The people at Buzz often advised me, and I was smart enough to know to listen to them."

Effects coordinator Ernie Farino (l) shoots backgrounds for the EEV launch sequence at Montreal's metropolitan incinerator using real on-set lasers.



The chief goal for Farino and his Canadian cohorts was the realization of the title creations, which come in several different versions. "The smaller, type 1 Screamers were designed by an L.A. artist, Jim Bandsuh. They're these steel spheres with little lathes in them. They burrow under the ground and then rocket up next to their prey," said Farino. "Ryal Cosgrove came up with the solution of showing them traveling beneath the ground. He's a classic example of a great effects guy. He just looked right past the problem of how difficult it was going to be to do it, and came up with a deceptively simple solution."

Cosgrove built a number of troughs through which various size spherical objects could be pulled. He then covered the troughs with latex and then covered that with sand. "The real trick was in figuring out how the sand should move and what speeds and how much torque it was going to take to achieve the look we wanted," said Farino.

Cosgrove also rigged up an air cannon in a pit so that the Screamers could shoot up from the sand at the end of their stalking. That effect was later enhanced with CGI animation because, said Farino, "No matter how slow motion we shot it, the thing was gone before it was seen. It was like filming a bullet."

A second style of Screamer was designed by Deak Ferrand, a matte artist at Buzz. To achieve Ferrand's vision in three dimensions Farino turned to long-time friends, the California-based Chiodo brothers, who built the puppets and animated them stop-motion. □

dos brought in Kent Burton, who had recently done animated work for them on the 'killer-dolls' sequence of TALES FROM THE HOOD and on DINOSAUR ADVENTURE, a documentary designed to be shown in a series of 360-degree theaters called Cinetropolis.

The Chiodos built all the *Screamers* seen in the film, including the Type 1 burrowers, designed by L.A. artist Jim Bandsuh, the Type 2 animated puppets, as well as some full-size, limited-motion models for on-set use. "The animation took about six or seven weeks," said Ed Chiodo. "Most of the shots are short, a half second to maybe five seconds, but even a half-second shot was a 10-hour day."

The Chiodos also built a cut-away version for a sequence where Weller and his compatriots examine an inert Screamer #1. "It's kind of an autopsy scene, but then it sparks to life, some kind of internal defense mechanism. There were built-in mechanics, self-contained motors and a little cable-actuated thing that shoots these blades out," Chiodo explained. "Both Ernie and I understood that it was going to be done on a table, and we built it to use that to hide some of the things that make it work. Ernie walked onto the set and found out it was a glass table. I guess he had to do some on-set refining, but I hear it turned out fine."

Normally the Chiodos prefer to be on-set to help avoid such snafus and to be sure their work is presented as effectively as possible, but they were comfortable that Farino would accomplish this for them. "We've known Ernie a long time" laughed Ed Chiodo. "He knows as much about effects as anybody in the world, and we certainly didn't miss out on working a night shoot in the middle of the Canadian winter."

While all involved felt the technically complicated aspects of the production went smoothly, the film would have to surmount one last obstacle on its way to completion: winter in Montreal.

"When I first got there, in October it was cold, but not horribly so," recalled Farino. "Then November was colder, and the locals kept telling us,

WORKING WITH WELLER

"Weller fell in love with his character," said Duguay. "I gave him his space to work and he gave me mine. We both contributed to making the best film we could."



Weller (r) and Andy Lauer as young recruit Ace Jefferson, attacked by "screamers," (inset) blade-wielding, self-replicating killing machines designed to eradicate striking miners.



'Wait until winter.' Then December was even colder, and they said the same thing. Come January we were wrapped in layers of clothing and wearing Arctic boots, and they were still saying, 'just wait.'"

Dealing with a shoot that was largely exteriors, including a particularly frigid rock quarry, and over 50% night sequences, the production faced temperatures of 45 below. When snow began to fall rather early in the season the production made a quick script change and the desert planet of Sirius-B became the snow planet of Sirius-B. The handful of interior sequences were largely shot in warehouses and in a huge, mostly abandoned, cement factory. "I really think it was colder in there than it was outside," said Farino. Director Duguay agreed, "Sometimes we would be shooting corridors deep within the factory. The cast would be running in some action sequence, and I'd be chasing after them strapped into a Steadicam rig, and the sweat and cement dust would just freeze on you."

Unlike long-time Los Angeles resident Farino, Montreal

native Duguay found the strenuous weather conditions more of a boon than burden. "I'm an old bear when it comes to these things. I started out as a reporter, carrying a camera through wars in the most horrible parts of the world. I don't mean that it wasn't hard. This may have been the hardest shoot of my career, but it forces you to truly focus on what you are doing. You must give it your all and think of nothing but the work, because if you think of how cold and how uncomfortable you are, then you are beaten."

"It was minus 45, the actors are cold, the camera is nearly breaking and the film is breaking, and I say 'OK. Let's do another one.' No one questions, no one rolls their eyes, because they have become as passionate as I am."

Farino echoed Duguay's description of his on-set methods. "I've never been around a director with that kind of stamina. He was out there every day. He works as his own camera operator, even the steadicam and remote work. The conditions were very difficult, but Christian utilized them to add a whole other visual dimension to the picture.

He took incredible advantage of the locations, and their feel. I've seen rough cuts of the film on video and it comes across even there. I get cold again just watching it."

Before wrapping the \$20 million *SCREAMERS*, Duguay's biggest production had been *LIVE WIRE*, a planned theatrical release that was instead sold to HBO. While disappointing at the time, Duguay today asserted that he is glad things turned out that way. "It was my first film in L.A. and there were people all around who did not have a film back-

ground, and yet were pretending that they knew better than I how the film should be done. It was a frustrating experience. Despite the hardships, *SCREAMERS* was, creatively, a joy. I am proud to have it be my first theatrical release."

While Duguay doesn't deny the rigors and complexities of the shoot he does feel that part of the trick to making an effects film work is assembling the right people and then letting them do their job. "When I walk on the set everything is in my computer. All the shot lists, the storyboards and the script. The only slot I leave open to work out on the set is the acting. I am not a maniac when it come to staging, but I am an extreme maniac when it comes to preparation. Effects are always a matter of logistics. My main job is to be sure that as all the elements come together, whether photography, performances, story, or the effects, that we never lose the dramatic focus.

"I think that is the biggest plus *SCREAMERS* has—as big as the effects are, and as good as they are, they are always a servant to the story." □

VAMPIRE GIRL

David Lynch backs an art film Roger Corman style.

By Lawrence French

Beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all.

—Andre Breton

NADJA is a stunningly beautiful black and white vampire film that embraces the rich heritage of the cinematic undead, while still managing to emerge with a style uniquely its own. Director Michael Almereyda wrote the script after deeply immersing himself in vampire films, fiction, and lore, including such classics as Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872), Carl Dreyer's *VAMPYR* (1932) and Lambert Hillyer's *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER* (1936). October Films opens the film in art venues this fall.

"I wanted to make a horror movie," said Almereyda, "because I was having trouble getting financing for scripts that weren't in any identifiable genre. David Lynch had been trying to help me raise money for a script about Edgar Allan Poe called *FEVER*, but we couldn't get the money to make it. I was sort of groping around, and then I thought about doing a vampire movie set in New York City.

Almereyda's initial inspiration for his script was provided by Andre Breton's surrealist volume, *Nadja*, first published in 1928. "That book was a kind of starting point for me," explained Almereyda. "There were a lot of things about madness, love, chance and identity in it that are related to what the movie is about. In Breton's book there's a feeling of a city having a separate life, and people being guided by and embracing chance. The book has a lot to do with surrealism in gen-

eral, but at the same time, it's a very different creature than the movie."

To cast the central role of Nadja, a mysterious and exotic female vampire, Almereyda picked a Romanian actress, Elina Lowensohn. Almereyda had worked with Lowensohn on his previous film, *ANOTHER GIRL ANOTHER PLANET*, and she had a small role in *SCHINDLER'S LIST*. The script was written specifically with Lowensohn in mind, and focuses on Nadja's nocturnal wanderings in lower Manhattan, as she searches for victims to satiate her lust. Nadja also happens to be the daughter of Count Dracula, like Gloria Holden in *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER* (Universal's sequel to *DRACULA*). When Nadja discovers that Van Helsing has destroyed her father, she attempts to change her vampiric ways. However, trouble develops when Nadja seduces and falls in love with Lucy, who is married to Van Helsing's nephew, Jim.

Although the script was in a commercial genre, it was still distinctly off-beat, and Almereyda faced money problems, partially because he wanted to shoot in black and



Romanian Elina Lowensohn plays Nadja, the vampire, with Karl Geary as Renfield in *NADJA*.

white. "It would have been impossible to make the movie in color on the budget we had," noted Almereyda. "In black and white we could cut a lot of corners and get away with things you couldn't do in color. I always wanted to make it in black and white, though, because I could evoke and refer to a lot of old vampire movies. It meant we had a huge problem getting financing, because people are not very friendly to black and white. When people read the script they'd say, 'It's great, but could you do it in color?'"

David Lynch, who helped raise the initial funding for *NADJA*, called Almereyda "one of the best independent, new wave directors in America. I was very happy to support him, because I believe in his talent and ideas." Unfortunately, two days before shooting was scheduled to begin, the financial backing suddenly vanished. That left Lynch in the awkward position of either stopping the production, or financing it on his own. "David very bravely paid for the movie himself," revealed Almereyda. "It was really amazing, because it was a huge gamble for David to take, and it's still a precarious situation, on whether or not he'll make his money back."

With Lynch backing the project, Almereyda shot the film in 5 and 1/2 weeks, scaling back on an already low budget. "When we began this, I was inspired by the way Roger Corman made his pictures," said Almereyda. "Corman was able to make his Poe pictures very fast, and on a very low budget, so that was something we were trying to emulate. I tried to cover scenes in a single take, and sometimes you have to imply

Director Michael Almereyda on the set in New York. Almereyda considered titling the project *VAMPIRE GIRL* and cited Corman as a production model.





Peter Fonda (r) plays Dr. Van Helsing in director Michael Almereyda's black and white ode to classic horror. Executive producer Lynch backed the project with his own money, for release by October Films.

“I wanted to make it in black and white to evoke a lot of old vampire movies. It meant a huge problem getting financing.”

—Director Michael Almereyda—

things, rather than show them.” At one point, the film was even going to have the more commercial sounding title of *VAMPIRE GIRL*. No doubt, Corman himself would be pleased with that title, had he distributed the picture.

Like *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, *NADJA* is one of the rare vampire movies to be told from the living dead's point of view. To evoke this subjective feeling, Almereyda shot sequences using 'Pixelvision,' which gives the images a blurry, out of focus quality as if they were seen through translucent glass. "Pixelvision was a plastic video camera made by Fisher-Price as a toy for kids," explained Almereyda. "The images produced by the camera are composed of 2000 square pixels. The pixels shift and shimmer and seem to shed light as you watch, endowing everything the camera records with a distinct physicality, and a feel of floating weight and depth. It's unlike the flat, cold quality of ordinary video. I felt it would approximate this feeling the vampires have of being up all night. There's something very unsettling and hallucinatory about it."

Shooting the Pixelvision sequences, Almereyda adapted his \$45 toy camera to use beta videotape (it normally takes regular audio cassette tape). Those images were then blown up to 35mm film, making a nice contrast to the luminously sharp B&W images captured by cameraman Jim Denault. It's a splendid job of cinematography, which was influenced by the poetic and sinister light and shadows in such films as Jean Cocteau's *ORPHEUS* and Ingmar Bergman's *HOUR OF THE WOLF*.

Since Almereyda shifts to Pixelvision whenever there's a vampire attack, it also has the effect of making the bloodletting less explicit and more dreamlike than if it were shot with the kind of high contrast clarity used for the rest of the movie. However, the MPAA still rated the film R "for scenes of bizarre vampire sexuality and gore."

Playing the role of Van Helsing, with a kind of larger than life style that could easily have been borrowed from Vincent Price, is none other than former AIP superstar, Peter Fonda. Although the film is played basically straight, Fonda is able to bring a rich vein of black humor to his role, due to the largely incongruous nature of hunting chic vampires in modern-day New York. Strangely enough, Fonda came to the part by a chance occurrence.

"My daughter Bridget's boyfriend, Eric Stolz, had been asked to play Jim, Van Helsing's nephew," explained Fonda. "Eric couldn't do the part, but he suggested me for Van Helsing. I read the script and thought it was really very funny. Michael thought I wouldn't be interested, because

there was very little money, but I loved the script, and it turned out to be one of the best times I've ever had making a movie."

Like most modern vampire movies, the ever shifting rules of vampire lore have been changed to suit the particular needs of the story. In this case, Almereyda dispenses with the crucifixes and other icons of Christianity, although the story is set at Christmas time. "I wanted to avoid religious iconography," declared Almereyda. "It's so powerful and ever present in other movies, and other places. It didn't seem directly relevant to me. I felt there were other ways to evoke the things that are at the heart of the story. At one point Lucy asks Nadja if she knows what being 'born again' is, because her father is a born again Christian. That line usually gets a laugh, but the idea of being born again, or being purified, is entangled with what a vampire is. It's sort of the dark side of Christianity. In many vampire movies, there's a lot about the blood (... 'which is the life'). It's sort of a reaction towards Christianity. The idea of the blood of Jesus Christ, of resurrection and salvation, have always been entwined with vampire mythology, and consequently it's in *NADJA* as well."

Filming the story entirely in New York, Almereyda found several suitably baroque settings, including a 40-room town house on Park Avenue, that had an immense rococo stairway. For the climax of the film, Van Helsing and his cohorts pursue Nadja back to her ancestral castle in Transylvania. Almereyda cleverly suggests the trip to Romania by simply superimposing a map of eastern Europe on the screen (*a la* *INDIANA JONES*). "At one point we were actually going to show the plane trip," said Almereyda. "Nadja would go to the bathroom on the plane, and smoke a cigarette. She'd look into the mirror and all you'd see would be the glowing tip of her cigarette. We had it all worked out, but ultimately it would have been too expensive for a scene that wasn't that important. We also had a scene where Peter Fonda was piloting the plane in pursuit of Nadja, that

continued on page 61

Executive producer David Lynch films his cameo as a morgue attendant. When financing collapsed Lynch put up the funds to complete the filming.



XTRO-3

WATCH THE SKIES

Director Harry Bromley-Davenport continues to explore the flip side of ET.

By James Van Hise

The monster was nowhere in sight, but its presence could be felt everywhere. That was the sensation experienced on visiting the warehouse in Burbank where various soundstage shots were being filmed during the last week of principal photography on XTRO 3: WATCH THE SKIES. Location shooting representing a tropical island had already been done out at the Iverson Ranch near Los Angeles. In the warehouse were various indoor sets, including an underground hideout where a half-crazed man has lived for 40 years as well as a cavern in which a half-crazed alien has made its own private torture chamber.

Directed by Harry Bromley-Davenport, this is his long awaited return to the realm of directing science fiction following the original XTRO (1982) and its ill-conceived sequel, XTRO 2 (1991). An alien is again at the heart of the matter in the film, but this time he is the victim, and he is striking back at those who did him wrong—namely the human race whom it holds responsible for his torture and imprisonment and for the vivisection of his mate. But this film has no real tie-in to the first two XTRO films beyond a common title and director, and the fact that there's an alien in the storyline. Triboro Entertainment releases the sequel on video November 7th.

The backstory leading up to



The extraterrestrial of XTRO 3: WATCH THE SKIES, which hits video stores in November from Triboro Entertainment, creature effects by David Barton.

the events depicted in XTRO 3 took place in the 1950s when the U.S. government sequestered a spacecraft with resident aliens on a deserted island for study. The government pulled the plug on the project, bombed the island to cover it up and killed everyone—or so they thought. Forty years later a team is sent to the island, which they were told had been a Japanese internment camp from World War Two and they're supposed to clear it of any old munitions left behind. But when they uncover the buried spacecraft, the alien is freed and it begins killing the soldiers on the island. The principal photography with the main characters lasted five weeks. The cast included Sal Landi, Karen Moncrieff, Jim Hanks (brother of Tom), Daryl Haney, Andrew Divoff, Virgil

Frye and Robert Culp.

Line producer Jamie Beardsley described XTRO 3 as a UFO conspiracy movie, but unlike the usual films in the genre, it's more character oriented and story driven, and it's also being made for a third of what a film like this would normally require. "The challenge is how to create a great product out of the few bits and scraps of things that we have," she explains. "That's the area where I work my own little magic. This has been the lowest budget film and most complicated of anything I've ever done in terms of weaving together the visual effects, the action effects, the pyro effects and the different things that must happen." Beardsley jokingly stated that her career is divided between art and schlock as her production credits

include ECHO PARK, RESERVOIR DOGS, REUBEN REUBEN as well as MUNCHIES and DEATH SPA.

Some of the action filmed has been pretty intense, and accidents have resulted. Andrew Divoff cut his hand during a scene shot out at sea on a boat. Sal Landi injured his back. Virgil Frye injured his leg when he ran past a squib which went off too close to him. Even optical effects supervisor Paul Sammon injured his hand at sea, and he had to wait all day until they returned to shore to get medical attention.

Suzanna Rupe, who did the regular makeup and the special makeup effects on the film, is clearly a woman who enjoys her work. Describing one of the more demanding effects she created for the camera, she said, "I got to open up his guts and disembowel one of our actors, and that was a lot of fun. Then we took a rib cage spreader and crushed his head with it and ripped his forehead open and exposed all the muscle, and then we gave him an alien enema! We tubed him everywhere, through the ears, through the slices on his leg and sucked out his blood and did a lot of dissecting." This is the way the creature gets revenge on humans for what they did to his mate 40 years ago. It's just one of the deaths in the film.

The alien also spits out a corrosive, acidic slime. When one of the characters accidentally touches some acid residue on a rock, pieces of her hand fall off.

Davenport's original XTRO in 1982 had star Maryam D'Abo deliver an alien egg to Peter Mandel as the sinister ringmaster, cocooned in her bathtub. Inset: The original's effects innovation, walking backwards, upside down, on all fours.



XTRO-3

CREATURE EFFECTS

CGI technology trickles down to the low budgeters.

By James Van Hise

Paul Sammon, the unit publicist on XTRO 3: WATCH THE SKIES, was also in charge of the special effects, served as still photographer, and also played two bit parts in the film.

As special effects coordinator, Sammon guided the effects shots during principal photography so that they could be properly enhanced during post-production. Originally there were only 16 special effects shots called for the film in the script, with Sammon's Awesome Productions unit given five weeks to produce the final shots. "Once we got rolling in post-production, and the director saw what we were capable of, he became very enthusiastic and immediately our special effects load jumped to 41 shots," said Sammon. "But the schedule didn't change so we had to more than one shot per day." A heavy

Effects supervisor Sammon in his cameo as a general, examining the bound and helpless female alien.



XTRO 3's vengeful ET, captured by the military in 1955, phasing in from his invisible camouflage mode, digital effects supervised by Paul M. Sammon.

load considering that some shots lasted more than 400 frames.

Davenport wanted the camouflage of the creature to change all the time a la PREDATOR. "What the audience will see is a man-sized shape in the form of, say, tree bark, which detaches itself from a tree about ten feet in the air, lands on the ground, blurs into a oval almost heat-wave rippling type of effect, changes into the creature itself, then looks around, all in one continuous shot," said Sammon. "Then it goes back into the camouflage effects."

To accomplish the set-ups for the shots, Sammon supervised on locations at both the Iverson Ranch and the Polsa Rosa Ranch in northeastern Los Angeles county. Iverson Ranch includes rock formations which have become familiar from their appearances in many films, and in particular in the 1960s TV series STAR TREK and LOST IN SPACE. Said Sammon, "I directed shots of puppeteers in

head-to-toe blue screen suits manipulating a full length rod puppet of the alien, or of stunt doubles for the alien. In post production I matted over the camouflage effect, or pulled out the puppeteers and the rod they were using."

Sammon utilized Wavefront software for the compositing. "It's better than traditional optical software," he said. "You have this color chart on the side from which you can literally pick any color in the spectrum and just put an arrow on it, hit one key and it will remove that color in every scene of film, without a matte. Just 'pop' and it's gone—there's a black space there. It's like an instant matte. With all the blue suit stuff, we digitized all the footage at once, about 300 feet of effects stuff, put on cartridges, each five and a half gigabytes. You just plug it in and then you can play with it."

David Barton's Modus Effects Company constructed the creature as well as several

miniatures for the film, one of which was the alien spacecraft which Sammon's unit photographed and enhanced. "We called it the UFP—the Unidentified Flying Penis because that's exactly what it is. It's extremely phallic and extremely testicular. It's a stylized male organ." The film itself is very much about male problems, the design inspiration. The miniatures were shot against blue screen and composited using Wavefront Explorer Pro, on Silicon Graphics computers. "We comped those models into either preexisting live action plates or digital plates that we created," said Sammon.

Effects include opening shots of a vast nebula and an asteroid which tumbles through the scene before the alien ship is seen. "Except for the ship, everything the audience will see in that shot is digitally created," said Sammon. "The starfield, the smoke effect we used for the nebula, which we then colored, the asteroid—all of it is digital."

Sammon was called in to enhance the sequence in which Tom Hanks is grabbed by the alien's long tongue and pulled up into the air. The tongue was just a pink plastic tube. "After talking to the director, I suggested we go and lay in a completely different flesh texture over the tongue, also add a moisture pass to make it look like it was actually dripping with fluid," said Sammon. "Then put a mottling effect over on top of it of black patches and whatnot, and flatten out and blur the edges. We had to do multiple passes on the tongue to achieve all these effects and it was grinding, slow work, but the final effect looks much better than the original."

Sammon hired Zero Gravity, Inc. of Houston, Texas to produce the digital effects. Sammon



"Xtro" and blue-suited puppeteer Richard Woloski of David Barton Effects.

also worked with the Digital Film Group at the Post Group.

The reason CGI (computer generated effects) are used so much today is that computers now have very specific software packages that cut down on the time involved in producing the shots. "Computers are very job specific," said Sammon. "If you're trying to remove a wire rig from an actor, you use a software package called 'No Strings Attached' from Elastic Reality. We were literally able

to put the cursor over these wires, click a button, and they were gone." But in other areas computers are slower and more expensive. "The wise filmmaker who knows special effects realizes that digital technology is yet another brush in the overall canvas of special effects art," said Sammon. "The best way to go is to take a smorgasbord of both the traditional and the cutting edge technologies and apply them to the project where applicable." □

Grip removal: out of camera range makeup supervisor David Barton and blue suited puppeteers during filming. CGI processing removes the puppeteers.



“Digital technology is just another brush for the effects artist,” said Sammon. “A smorgasbord of cutting edge and traditional techniques is best.”

“It’s boiling and its wonderful!” Rupe remarked enthusiastically. “She also gets webbed and he starts dissecting her.” The alien also wraps its tongue around people and leaves an acid burn. This happens to Friedman, the character played by Jim Hanks, who also gets bit by a rabbit and shot in the leg. “So I got to explode his leg and tear it open, which was nice,” said Rupe. “And what I love about Harry, our director, is he goes ‘Make it bigger! Make it bigger!’ and I go ‘Yes! Yes!’ The more that one can evoke an emotional response the better he likes it.”

Rupe had a lot of fun doing the kind of effects guaranteed to make audiences squirm. She rattled off a laundry list of maiming effects. “We did cocooning, impalement, hand burnings, lots of bullet wounds, tearing open of legs and exposing bones and a broken collar bone neck piece sticking out. I love it!”

Rupe developed the techniques that enabled her to accomplish these effects by working as a volunteer with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s department doing makeup for their training films. They required such recreations as a drive-by shooting, a nine-year-old child hit and run victim and a drunk driving accident where someone went through a windshield and had glass and pieces of the steering wheel sticking out of their stomach. Rupe referred to medical book pictures which she would recreate with makeup. She even consulted morgue files and pictures of gun wounds. Her peers in the industry offered advice and information. She did practice makeups on her children.

Rupe also got additional reference for her library of painful looking injuries while working on XTRO 3 itself, thanks to cooperative actors like Karen Moncrieff, who plays Watkins, a character who starts out like a beaten dog but throughout the

course of the movie comes into her own and finds her strength. “Usually in low-budget movies they get the girl out of the way before they do the fun stuff: the action. But in this, my character gets to go through all the bombings, she wields a gun, and I found all that really fun because usually women don’t get to do that in this genre. We all have our battle scars and my legs have a plethora of wounds and scabs. Suzanna, our makeup artist, loves all that stuff; you’re bleeding from open wounds and she goes, ‘Can I photograph that?’ “

Daryl Haney not only plays the character of Hendricks in XTRO 3, but he wrote the screenplay as well. He’s appeared in various films over the years, including SIEGE, DADDY’S BOYS, THE SKETCH ARTIST and CRIME ZONE. Haney’s writing credits began with the seventh entry in the FRIDAY THE 13th series, which he described as “An awful experience in a lot of ways.” He also wrote some recent films for

Jim Hanks (Tom’s brother) gives first aid to alien web victim Andrea Lauren Herz, with Sal Landi (r).



XTRO-3

SERIES AUTEUR

Harry Bromley-Davenport offers advice to would-be filmmakers.

By James Van Hise

XTRO 3 director Harry Bromley-Davenport noted that fantasy and science fiction is a genre he very much likes working in. "I love fantasy films," he said. "I think they're very exciting and good fun because you can do loony, crazy things like inventing alien behavior and thinking up crazy scenarios you couldn't do in conventional films. But what I really like most is putting characters into impossible situations and seeing them try to get out."

Davenport compared the new sequel to the first XTRO, but noting that that, unlike the first, XTRO 3 was shot non-union. "I'm ten years older," said Davenport, who directed the original in 1982, "so I know a little bit more how to do this. Otherwise it's exactly the same misery."

"I think the saving grace of [XTRO 3], as with XTRO, is that the monster had a reason for what it was doing." In XTRO the monster had come to reclaim its child. "And in this one, the creature's motivation is that it's seen its mate being carved up by scientists. So that's why it's annoyed."

Davenport actually began in films working on various special effects units in England, including RETURN OF THE JEDI, ALIEN, ALIENS and KRULL. "Also little bits of SUPERMAN," said Davenport, "very much as a minion doing second unit work, blue screen, special effects, pyro and miniatures. Standing around on the set not doing much all day, waiting for the miniatures people to be set up and do it in their own time. I started as an apprentice to an American director named Nicholas Ray, and he was a very sweet man and was very good to me."

"Then I went in the editing rooms which I think is part of the place to learn about films. If anyone wants to direct films they should certainly spend some time in a cut-



Bromley-Davenport with XTRO 2 star Jan Michael Vincent during 1991 filming.

ting room, and they should spend as much time as possible developing stories and writing them, if possible with writers who know what they're doing. And try to get whatever experience you can get with actors."

All of the characters who appear in XTRO-3 were given their own backstories and personalities, which the director believes will make the film much more interesting than the usual thriller. "They all know where they come from, even if we don't use it," said Davenport. "We know who they are, what their lives have been like up until now. We have little lines here and there which tell you a little bit about them. And that's what good writing is about, I think, that sneaking in little views of people, as long as they're interesting."

Director Harry Bromley-Davenport is a bit of an irascible character who takes a very cynical approach to the business of making movies, particularly after his unhappy experience in 1991 directing the first sequel to XTRO. Noted Davenport about XTRO 2, "It's a very bad film which is really not a sequel at all. It was an awful film with a drunkard Jan Michael Vincent wandering around, throwing up and hitting people. He was ghastly. He should never be employed as an actor again. He was almost permanently drunk on set."

But the memory of working with Vincent makes Davenport too angry to dismiss it so briefly. "He was a reprehensible performer who never knew his lines; could hardly stand up for drink. He couldn't play a scene with somebody else because he was so out of it that he couldn't remember his lines, or what the scene was. He made no effort at all in that film. He probably singlehandedly wrecked the project. He's a drunken, disgusting, red neck slob. I couldn't understand anything he said! He was either drunk or



The original XTRO, first stage creature design by Christopher Hobbs. The director got his start in British special effects on films like ALIEN.

sounded like he'd been kicked in the throat."

Davenport had advice for those who want to break into filmmaking: learn how to edit. "I assume that a lot of people who read your magazine are interested in making films themselves, and obviously they're not going to be able to walk into a cutting room and say, 'Give me a job' because they're completely unqualified. I would suggest to anyone who wanted to start and didn't know where to start that they should get hold of some actors and try putting on some lunchtime theater. Get into theater and performance. That will lead you to the writers because the actors are the mouthpiece. And get a hold of an 8mm camera or a video camera and shoot lots and lots of stuff and edit it. Then you'll be on your way. If you're any good, and you've got any ability and you can persevere, then you're going to have material to show. And if you have good material to show, then believe me people will want to use you. Unless you have something to show, no one gives a shit. They'll have you making the tea."

As to whether there are more opportunities for film makers today due to the huge home video market, Davenport thought not. "There are no opportunities waiting for anyone. You have to go out and make your own opportunities." □

Roger Corman including *MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH* and *TO DIE STAND-ING*, as well as films seen on cable frequently like *STRANGER BY NIGHT* and the sequels to *MIRROR IMAGES* and *ANIMAL INSTINCTS*.

When he wrote *XTRO 3* for Harry Bromley-Davenport to direct, he knew he'd be playing one of the characters, but he didn't know which one. He certainly didn't know that he'd be playing the guy who'd be disemboweled. "That's the thing that the crew is going to remember most about me on this movie. I never got so damn much attention! Everybody was walking over, trying to take a look. It's a little bit like being dead by the side of the highway in a car wreck where everyone is slowing down to take a look."

The lead is played by Sal Landi, an actor who has appeared in 30 feature films (most recently in *COPS AND ROBBERSONS*) as well as in more than 100 episodes of various TV series (including *NYPD BLUE*). *XTRO 3* is his first science fiction acting experience. Landi is a big comic book fan and has been collecting for more than 30 years. These days he concentrates his back issues searches on such Golden Age titles as *CAPTAIN AMERICA* and *SUPERMAN*.

Like many of the other performers on the film he's also experienced his share of bumps and bruises (including an injured back), but he loved the excitement of making *XTRO*. "You know going in that [injury] goes with the territory and you don't really feel it when it's happening

"The director leaves the character motivation to us," said Jim Hanks. "Everyone contributed that way, changing a slant and adding dialogue."



James Spinelli has his back ripped open by the avenging ET in a story with no connection to the previous films, makeup effects design by Suzanna P. Rupe.

because you're so excited about doing it. I walk around normally at 33 1/3. But as soon as I get a job like this I'm at 45 and I'm really going. All my senses are alert. All my creativity comes out. I'm alive. That's the parallel I think between my character, Kirn. When he's on his mission he's alive because this is what he's been bred to do."

Jim Hanks plays Friedman, and one of the most remarkable things one notices upon meeting him is that he bears a truly astonishing resemblance to his brother—Tom Hanks. Jim doubled for

Tom in a couple of scenes in *FORREST GUMP*, but he has worked hard at keeping his own career separate from his brothers. Jim even turned down offers to star in TV series spinoffs of *SPLASH* and *BIG*. He's appeared in the TV series *HOME FRONT* and *SECOND CHANCES*, the film *DARK RED*, and has done some stand-up comedy.

In describing the character he plays, Hanks explained that since some of the other characters are more flamboyant, he deliberately played Friedman as more soft spoken. Like Landi, this is Hanks' first work in a science fiction film. "Ideally I don't want to do low-budget stuff, but the script was what got me. Daryl did a good job and he's very open to ideas from other actors. I've doubled my lines just in the ad-libs."

Davenport is open to the actors adding things in order to get more out of a scene. "He leaves the character motivation up to us. Everybody has contributed that way. Just changing a slant and adding dialogue."

One of his more unusual scenes involved the creature grabbing Hanks' character

around his neck with its tongue and yanking him up into a tree. "It was freezing and I was in the harness and hanging about four inches off the ground for an hour and a half until we finally got it all to work out," said Hanks. "But it was so cold that it actually made it easier for me to act frightened because I was already shaking! You just let the cold seep in and you start shaking and then you start screaming and you've warmed yourself up by the time you're done with the scene."

Virgil Frye, known in the film only as the Survivor. Frye is a legend in Hollywood because he's a character actor who has worked in films for many years and whose close friends include Marlon Brando. While making *XTRO 3* Frye explained that he was having great fun playing the Survivor, a character who has been isolated on the island for 40 years with no one to talk to except the cadavers of his friends who were killed, and the rabbits he's dined on for four decades.

"He's very organic. He's crazy. Very emotional; you never know what he's going to do next," said Frye. "I'm having a ball with him. I've let this character evolve very instinctively. He comes from a very emotional space. This character, probably more than any character I've ever done, comes from the crotch." □

Virgil Frye as the startled, half-mad "survivor," stranded on an island 40 years with the alien.



Partners in crime: the sinister military brass responsible for the film's deadly government alien coverup, Robert Culp (l) and Andrew Divoff.



GOD'S ARMY

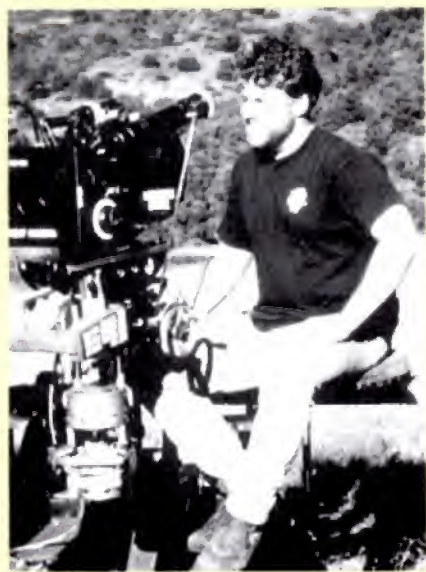
Gregory Widen on filming his Old Testament allegory.

By Matthew F.
Saunders

If you thought angels were nothing but cute, winged guardians who star in commercials and save baseball teams, Gregory Widen (*HIGHLANDER*, *BACKDRAFT*) is ready to enlighten you in his new fantasy film, *THE PROPHECY* (formerly *GOD'S ARMY*, *DAEMONS*). Unlike today's "warm, fuzzy" conception of angels, Christopher Walken's Gabriel isn't a harp-playing yes-man. The film, a syn-

thesis of the Bible's original conception of angels, who often were portrayed as violent messengers of death in the Old Testament, and "Paradise Lost," John Milton's 17th century poem about Lucifer's fall from grace, portrays angels as complicated souls prone to jealousy over humans. Miramax was set to open the long-delayed project September 1.

The disillusioned Gabriel, upset about humanity's place in Heaven, loses faith and leads a group of renegade angels in a war to possess the soul of a dead Army Colonel, which will lead them to victory. Elias Koteas portrays Thomas Dagget, a former priest-turned-cop, and Virginia Madsen (*CANDY-MAN*, *HIGHLANDER 2*) is Katherine, an elementary school teacher, caught in the battle to stop Gabriel and save the life of a school girl who is possessed by the dead colonel's spirit. Viggo Mortensen plays Lucifer, who intercedes on behalf of humanity



Widen, the scripter of *HIGHLANDER*, turns director on his saga of angels and devils.

and the idea that they're sort of God's hitmen. If you read the Bible, they spent an awful lot of time killing first borns and turning cities to salt, especially in the Old Testament, and so the idea was to really play up that aspect of their personality.

"I thought we'd lost in our modern age the feeling that angels are anything but these fluffy things on your shoulder. There was an earlier time, a few hundred years ago, when they were seen in a much more complicated way, as creatures that were fearsome in some ways. They have free will, they're not just an extension of God, because they obviously can rebel; they did it once before. They're just fascinating to me as a creature, [with] the ability to praise God all day, but with one wing dipped in blood. You're doing God's dirty work all the time, and you have free will, so what kind of personality does that create in a creature?"

and Eric Stoltz (*MASK*) portrays Simon, a rival angel. Amanda Plummer (*THE FISHER KING*) also stars as Rachel.

According to Widen, who wrote as well as directed, the film sprang from his fascination with the idea of what makes an angel go bad, prompted by reading Milton and studying the Bible. "I was interested in exploring that and did a lot of research with the Bible," said Widen. I try to back up the movie as much as I can with the Bible. I've got a very unusual take on angels,



Raymie Jones as the Devil's minion, makeup designed by Scott Patton, in *THE PROPHECY*.

Although this view of angels is firmly rooted in scripture and literature of old, a strong backlash still might be expected since, similar to Jesus' human fallibility in *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*, angels are depicted here as less than perfect. Widen, however, doesn't anticipate such a response.

"I don't expect, actually, a surprisingly negative response. The few people that I've talked to that have seen the film, that I would call Born Again Christians, have been very supportive, because the film in the end comes out very pro-faith—as being about faith and free will. I think those are important issues in it and it will do alright that way. I don't think we'll get a lot of complaints."

Ironically, the film's new-yet-old views coincide with a renewed pop culture interest in angels, as seen in *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD*, *HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN* and a multitude of angel books that portray angels as kind guardians whose sole purpose is to help humans through troubled times. Widen, however, questions this current interpretation, arguing, "I think it's a very simplistic idea of angels and very perfect for the nineties; it's very me-centric. I mean, they're there to serve you and help you and be your guardians. And I just took the idea that for most of religious history, angels were they're own creatures, and they had a lot on their minds besides people. And I don't think they spent all day thinking about us. I think they're much more independent and therefore much more interesting.

"Personally, angels in movies are just always so dull, because they're these sweet little guardians, catching baseballs in outfields, and that's why most angels are sort of stupid. And I think it's too bad, because there is so



“I try to back up the movie as much as I can with the Bible. I’ve got a very unusual take on angels, the idea that they’re God’s hitmen.”

—Director Greg Widen—

Viggo Mortensen (l) as Lucifer, surveying the battlefield with his acolyte. Widen directed his own script on a low budget in Arizona, under the title *GOD’S ARMY*, released by Miramax September 1 with a new title.

much literature there—Biblical literature—and it really supports the idea of much more complicated and independent creatures, which are much richer for a movie.”

Since the film relies heavily on historical and literary influences, many audience members unfamiliar with angelic lore might be turned off. Widen disagreed, countering, “I don’t think so. A lot of the stuff is mainly textural and will help your enjoyment of the film. And if you don’t get every single Biblical detail, I don’t think it gets in the way. If you do [get it], it’s just an added benefit.”

The film’s interpretation of angels isn’t the only potentially controversial viewpoint. While God and Jesus are mentioned, Lucifer plays a significant role at film’s end.

“Lucifer actually makes an appearance in almost a Lectorian sort of way,” said Widen, “because his basic position is that two Hells is one Hell too many. Gabriel is, in many ways, taking Lucifer’s route, from a Milton point of view.

“Unfortunately now we tend to push these things into all evil and all bad, and the Devil is just this cackling guy in a corner who was evil from moment one. Actually in the Bible and a lot of other writings, Lucifer started out as the good guy. He was the best angel, and along the way he began seeing things in a way that became incompatible with staying with God. And it was almost a heartbreaking falling out. Gabriel is doing the same thing in many ways, where he doesn’t think he’s doing anything wrong. He thinks he’s right and every-

body else is wrong. He doesn’t want to be a king, he doesn’t want to rule in Heaven, he’s not trying to overthrow God. He just thinks there’s a fundamental wrong going on and everyone just sees it wrong.

“Ultimately that’s how Lucifer fell, too. He wasn’t really trying to undo God, he just disagreed. Lucifer’s a much more tragic figure in this movie. He’s more like a guy who lost the love of his life and is still a really bad guy, but is still kind of a sorrowful guy, too. But he’s there to help the humans because it’s simply not in his interests for Gabriel to win.”

The story also juxtaposes Christian mythology with aspects of Navajo mysticism. With the final battle staged on a Navajo reservation, the question of how two seemingly disparate beliefs can coexist is raised. “They weave pretty tightly,” explained Widen. “The idea is that the girl’s possessed, and the Navajo culture does have

a procedure for depossessing someone. And they carry on as if that’s the issue and the two worlds meld climatically at the end, where you have an Indian exorcism and you also have Christian-based humans desperately trying to stop these angels. The idea is that they all complement each other; they’re not necessarily in opposition to each other as two concepts.

“For example, there’s a line in the movie where one guy turns to the Indian and says, ‘You know, this may not be a Navajo ghost,’ and the Indian says, ‘It’s all the same.’ That’s the idea. As far as they’re concerned, this is just a negative spirit inhabiting a girl.”

In eerie fashion, the production had its own run in with evil spirits while filming in Arizona. On the day filming was to occur on an Indian village set, Jones Benally, a medicine man employed as a stunt man, warned producers that two bad omens—the sighting of a coyote and an owl—had occurred and he had misgivings about continuing the production. A storm, with 120 miles-per-hour winds and lightning, subsequently blew in, destroying the set.

“We had built an Indian village on a cliff, and it blew away one night,” remembered Widen. “We had a hellacious storm. It was foretold by a medicine man because we had accidentally killed an owl with one of our trucks.”

Despite the bad omen-induced weather, the two-month production went smoothly. “I had a great time,” said Widen, who makes his feature directorial debut (his previous directing credit is a *TALES FROM THE*

CRYPT segment entitled “Half-way Horrible”). “I had really great actors, which is half your job. If you have great actors, the most important thing is to just get out of the way. I definitely had Christopher Walken in mind [when I wrote this]. He was the first one that signed on. Walken is an incredibly gifted actor. He gives you exactly what you want. And he has a certain ethereal quality about him that really works well with this—that otherworldly quality helps you believe he’s not quite *of here*. I thought that worked enormously well for him.” □

Christopher Walken plays the angel Gabriel, no harp-playing yes-man.



SPACE

ABOVE & BEYOND

The final frontier grows more crowded with an entry from X-FILES territory.

By Paula Vitaris

The 7:00 p.m. timeslot on Sunday has been a troublesome one for television's Fox Network (anyone remember FORTUNE HUNTER or THE GREAT DEFENDER?), but Fox is betting that its new science-fiction adventure, SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND, will succeed where previous entries failed. Created by former X-FILES writers and producers Glen Morgan and James Wong, SPACE follows the exploits of a squadron of young Marine pilots thrown into sudden, all-out war against an inscrutable race of aliens. With its numerous locales, both on and off Earth, rocket launches, fleets of spaceships, and pitched battles, SPACE is one of the most ambitious projects to make its way to the small screen, with the pilot's complicated, six-week shoot last spring occupying all the soundstages at the Village Roadshow Studios near Brisbane, Australia.

Although the show's cast consists in large part of relatively unknown actors, there are some familiar faces among the supporting characters. R. Lee Ermey, the real-life drill sergeant who won acclaim as drill sergeant in FULL METAL JACKET, takes on a similar role



Military cadets on the front lines of a galactic war (l to r): Theresa Wong, Morgan Weisser, Joe de la Fuente, Rodney Rowland, Lanei Chapman and Kristen Cloke.

in SPACE as tough Sergeant Major Frank Bougus. Noted Australian actor, Colin Friels (DARKMAN), has a small role as a Marine officer.

The story, though, really belongs to the youthful pilot cadets, in particular the trio of Nathan West, Shane Vansen and Cooper Hawkes, whose reasons for joining up at a time when peace reigns throughout a united Earth and the military is devalued are as diverse as their backgrounds. Morgan Weisser plays Nathan, who sees the Corps as his only hope to search out the missing woman he loves. Kristen Cloke, with extensive credits in episodic television but only one previous genre credit, the

feature film MEGAVILLE, is Shane, whose murdered parents were also Marines, and Rodney Rowland plays Cooper Hawkes, regarded as an outcast because he is an "in vitro," conceived in a tank.

The cast is filled out with Lanei Chapman and Joel de la Fuente as fellow cadets Vanessa Damphouse and Paul Wang, and Bill Hunter (THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA, QUEEN OF THE DESERT) as United Nations director Spencer Chartwell. Another important role is veteran pilot McQueen, played by James Morrison, whose background includes work as a playwright, filmmaker and clown.

Shooting the two-hour pilot was a grueling but rewarding experience. "We had a zillion sets, a lot of them coming in at the last minute," writer/producer Glen Morgan recalled. "At one point we went away for a week. We shot at an Air Force base and then we filmed in sand hills which stood in for Mars. That locked the actors up in helmets, and it was so hot they became claustrophobic."

"I've never worked on anything with the scale of those sets," remarked Morgan Weisser. "They were amazing. We had seven or eight soundstages and we used them all. Practically the whole studio was filled with the ISSCV [Internal Solar System Cargo Vehicle] and the Saratoga launch site.

"The final days of the shoot were all blue-screen work for the big battle," said Morgan, "while Jim [Wong] was out shooting inserts. It got crazy." Helping the Americans get through it all was the cooperative Australian crew, who were praised by producers and cast alike. "The crews were wonderful," said Morgan, echoed by Cloke: "We had the greatest crew in the world, really nice people who made it a pleasure to go to work."

Since the youthful cast were all playing Marines, the produc-

STARSHIP TROOPERS

“I don’t really look upon SPACE as a science fiction show,” said co-creator Glen Morgan. “It’s like COMBAT [in outer space]. It’s action adventure. It’s a war series.”

tion difficulties caused by differences in time zones made remaining in the U.S. the logical choice. Morgan, Wong and Nutter traveled to Phoenix to scout locations by helicopter, but ultimately decided to keep the production in Los Angeles, renting an old clothing warehouse in Culver City and converting it to hold the enormous SPACE soundstages. The sets were packed up and shipped by boat from Australia to Los Angeles. Shooting began July 17 on the first one-hour episode, with Nutter at the helm.

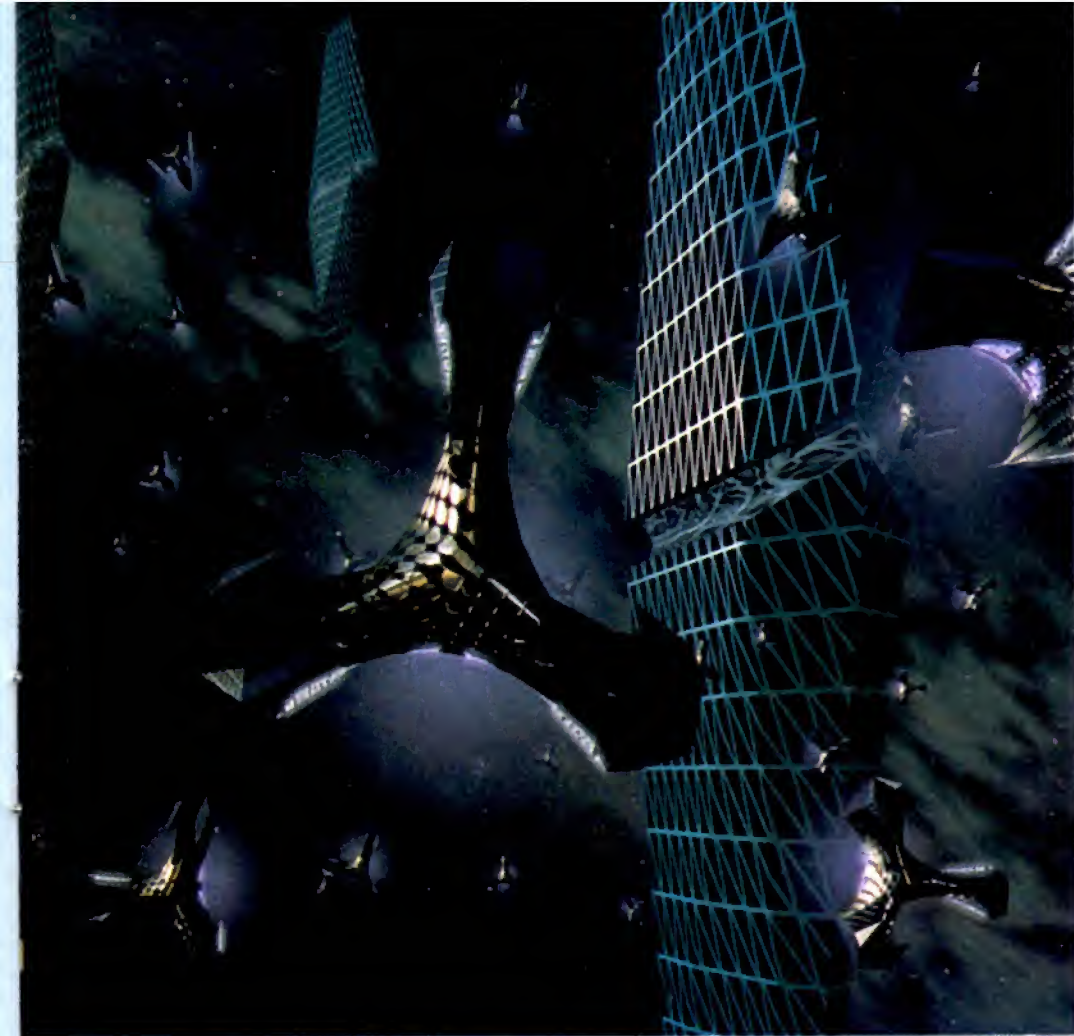
Stephen Zito (MCKENNA, LONESOME DOVE: THE SERIES, MIDNIGHT CALLER) has joined the SPACE staff as co-executive producer. Other producers are Tom Towler, supervising producer; Herb Adelman, co-producer and unit production manager; and Ken Dennis, associate producer. Marilyn Osborn, formerly a story editor on TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL, and author of the X-FILES episode “Shapes,” and Matt Kiene and Joe Reinkemeyer, formerly story editors with LAW & ORDER, have signed on as staff writers. Tony Palmieri, director of photography for Fox’s VR5, takes over from David Eggby, who lensed the pilot. Tim McHugh, of SFX firm Area 51, is visual FX producer, and Glenn Campbell is visual FX supervi-

sor. Shirley Walker, long-time associate of composer Danny Elfman, wrote the score.

“I don’t really look upon SPACE as a science-fiction show,” said Morgan, who claims classic World War II films as his and Wong’s primary influence for the show’s storyline and visual style. “It’s action adventure, it’s a war series. It’s like COMBAT. I’m sure people will say it’s like Heinlein’s STARSHIP TROOPERS and [Joe Haldermann’s] THE FOREVER WAR, and that’s OK, because those are war things. Jim and I are working on the first episode. We have these artificial intelligence bad guys and then you get into these science-fiction things, and you go, ‘Wait, forget all that. Let’s get into a more visceral story.’ The show is made for my dad, not the sci-fi guys. My dad says, ‘You know, I really want to watch STAR TREK—but all those guys with big ears!’ And I know what he means, because I feel the same way a lot of times.

“SPACE is about people with ghosts in their past who’re connected together and put into a situation where they may die, and if it’s a science fiction situation, great. We’re going to do the kind of stories we did on THE X-FILES; for instance, you read in *Discover* an article about a thing behind your brain that scientists suspect houses fear? And so, what if you inject a soldier with something that could numb this for the 12 hours that they’re in battle, and if the battle lasts 15 hours, then what happens? We’ll take that kind of science.”

Morgan admits that he is not completely happy with the 7:00 p.m. Sunday timeslot, opposite perennial CBS powerhouse 60 MINUTES, but the early hour will not keep him and Wong from doing the serious stories they intend to explore. The network, he said, has given the SPACE team the “go ahead to do adult themes.” □



The intergalactic threat facing the Earth: alien fighters swarm from the hive motherships as they enter the solar system, effects by Pasadena’s Area 51.

ers brought in a U.S. Marine sergeant and told him to give the actors a taste of military life. The sergeant obliged with an exhaustive session of push-ups, marching and drilling with M-16 rifles in the hot sun. The next day he took his charges to an obstacle course at an Australian military base, where he put them through the paces, including an immersion in brackish water that Weisser called “the foulest-smelling in the world. I guess it’s part of the toughening-up training that they do.” The obstacle course was just a precursor to filming the scenes set on Mars, where the cadets undergo survival training. The days spent on these scenes were particularly burdensome for the actors, who had to trudge through sand dunes while encased in full body suits and helmets, with 15-pound packs on their back and bulky, futuristic rifles in their hands.

The pilot was completed on budget and on schedule, and immediately upon their return to the United States, Morgan and Wong headed to the cutting room with director David Nutter. They had been told originally to come up with a 40-minute excerpt, but the network decided it wanted a rough cut of the entire two-hour pilot, and the team had to scramble, spending many late hours putting together the required footage. Much of the SFX

would have to wait for insertion later on, but the Mars scene received its digital alteration by the digital effects company Area 51 in time for the presentation to the network. “For our scenes on Mars, we had to turn these white sands red and the blue sky a pinkish-yellow,” said Morgan. “It was done frame by frame. We had to do that sequence first, and that was our hardest one to do.”

Based on the rough cut, Fox picked up the show, ordering 12 one-hour episodes. Morgan and Wong began to put together a writing and production staff, as well as a final determination about the permanent shooting location. Originally Morgan thought that the series would be shot in Australia, but the inconvenience of filming so far away from home, and the communica-

Rodney Rowland as Cooper Hawkes (in helmet) an “in vitro,” bred for military service. The new Fox hour show airs on Sunday nights at 7:00 p.m.



RUNAWAY

The story behind the making of the first

By Dan Scapperotti

A movie star whose longevity made a comeback on the big screen last summer. No, not Sylvester Stallone. Mickey Mouse starred in his first cartoon since "The Simple Things" in 1953. Although the Mouse has appeared in featurettes such as "Mickey's Christmas Carol" and "The Prince and the Pauper," "The Runaway Brain," which debuted with *A KID IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT* in August was the first all new Mickey cartoon in over 40 years.

Directing the short was Chris Bailey, a Disney animator who moved into directing with a couple of projects for Euro Disney. Bailey supervised the computerized cat in *HOCUS FOCUS*, and was called on by Disney chief Michael Eisner to ready a Mickey short for the character's 65th birthday. Bailey dug up a batch of old story ideas created for the merchandising division and pitched them to Jeffrey Katzenberg. But, as Bailey noted, "We missed Mickey's 65th, but 'The Runaway Brain' eventually got made."

Unlike Bugs Bunny who ran afoul of everything from witches to giants to invaders from Mars, Mickey Mouse usually had his feet planted firmly on the ground. There were a few exceptions in such cartoons as "The Mad Doctor," "Lonesome Ghosts" and "Mickey's Mechanical Man." But, for the most part, Mickey has avoided horror and science fiction elements.

In the new cartoon, Mickey needs some quick cash to get Minnie a gift. Answering a want ad, Mickey accidentally becomes the subject of a mad scientist's brain switching experi-



In the grip of the monster, a conscious effort to add horror elements into Mickey's mundane cartoon world in his first animated short since 1953's "Simple Things."

ment. Mickey gets his brain switched with a giant marauding monster who takes his body and runs amok through the city. Not only does the Mouse, trapped in the monster's body, have to get the monster back and switch his brain, but he has to rescue Minnie, who runs into the monster, as well.

"One of my favorite Mickey cartoons," said Bailey, "is the black and white 'Mad Doctor.' It just seems so off-beat that it is refreshing to me. I definitely wanted to make a seven-minute action adventure, science fiction cartoon with Mickey. When I got the assignment I looked through as much Mickey material as I could. I tried to take what I thought was the best from the comic strips. Mickey's a little adventurer in almost all of those stories. My goal was to take the personality from the early black and white cartoons and put it in the contemporary color body.

"In the early days Mickey was a young mouse only a cou-

ple of years out of high school or college, who is dating Minnie Mouse. He never has money in his pocket and he's young enough that he feels that he doesn't have to take any crap from anybody. He's a real good-natured guy but when push comes to shove he won't back down. He'll jump into a fight without hesitation with someone ten times his size if he feels he's being taken advantage of.

"Over the years as the animators got older and more domesticated, Mickey got older and

more domesticated. In the beginning in 'Two Gun Mickey,' for example, he's just out to get a girl or impress her. In 'Building A Building' his boss Pegleg Pete infringes on Mickey's rights somehow and they get into a big conflict. They're very basic conflicts for a young person to have. Later on as he got older the conflicts were with his boss or landlord, that kind of thing. Later on Mickey's cartoons came to be about being late for tickets to the opera. Things like that which people don't have any relationship to at all."

The new short was the first production at Disney's new studio in France. Feature animation is moving so fast that the company wanted a European unit. After six months the production was moved to Los Angeles for the final effects animation sequences. The animators were able to take some liberties with Mickey's traditional look. "When I was working on the short originally," Bailey explained, "I was just sitting in my office and I was doing drawings that appealed to me. One drawing was just of Mickey Mouse



Smooching with Minnie, cartoon romance '90s style. Inset: Wayne Allwine and Russie Taylor, the husband-and-wife voice team.



Y BRAIN

Mickey Mouse cartoon in over 42 years.

running amok and he had clearly lost his mind. I gave him sharp, shark teeth and ragged up his fur and made one eyeball bloodshot. I told a friend of mine [Tim Hauser] who was working on the cartoon that we had to come up with something that fit this drawing. He really liked it also and he went away and came back with the two or three paragraphs which became 'The Runaway Brain.'

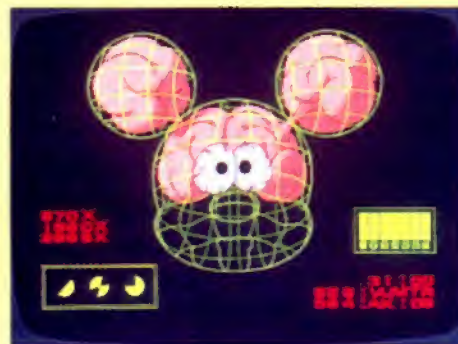
"Mickey's brain goes into the monster's body and the monster's brain goes into Mickey's body. When that happens Mickey's body metamorphoses slightly so that the proportions are slightly different, the skin tone changes, the fur is all ragged and he has shark teeth."

The monster is a giant Pegleg Pete about five times his normal size. "He's a King Kong-size Frankenstein monster," said Bailey. "It's a little more Marvel Comic than Pegleg Pete. When Mickey's in the monster body he has soft edges and is a little rounder and cartoony and when the monster is in his own body he's much more like a Marvel comic's drawing or a Jack Kirby drawing of the Incredible Hulk."

Andreas Deja, who made a name for himself at the studio animating the villains in recent features, was the supervising animator at the Paris facility. "His job was twofold over there," Bailey explained. "He had to supervise the animators of Mickey and all the characters, but he also had to instruct everyone in the way that feature animation works. This was basically a television animation studio before. The people are very talented but they're not used to the freedom of feature animation. They really have no experience with the type of acting that we expect from animators.



Mickey gets his brain scanned and switched with the monster, Pegleg Pete. The short was produced at Disney's new animation facility in Paris, France.



I not only gave Andreas the key acting scenes of the characters to animate, but he also supervised every one of those characters."

Beside Mickey, Minnie, and the monster, Bailey drew on the old Mickey Mouse comic strips created by Floyd Gottfredson for the inspiration of the mad scientist. With a bow to legendary animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, the whacked-out scientist is called Dr. Frankenollie. "The character was originally based on Dr. X from the comic strip," said Bailey. "Originally I wrote in Dr. X but the executives at the studio thought the design was too old-fashioned. So I updated the design a little bit. Then they didn't like the name Dr. X so I had a 'name the mad scientist con-

test.'" Dr. X was one of a trio of simian creatures who gave Mickey a hard time in such strips as "Blaggard Castle."

Bailey noted it wasn't easy to test the waters of change. "We all knew Mickey needed some sort of energy injection of some kind," Bailey said. "But the executives were afraid to do anything that is against his type. There is a strong sensitivity as to what Mickey can and can't do. Or what can or can't be in a Mickey cartoon. There were some scenes in the cartoon that were too extreme for the studio. At one point Dr. Frankenollie wanted to get the monster's attention so he took out this big wrench and was banging Mickey on the head with it. Mickey had some kind of science fiction contraption helmet on his head

and it was making a giant bell sound. They thought it was too tortuous of Mickey and not appealing for that to happen. It just seemed like a cartoon gag to me. So that was cut out.

"The monster is very charming and he's after Minnie in the cartoon. They wanted to be careful that it didn't go too far and become too lascivious, so one of the things we had to do was not have him salivate. His tongue is hanging out because he's this ugly monster. We had him drooling like a mad dog and they felt that the saliva made it too sexually oriented so we took the saliva out and everyone thought it was fine. A lot of it seemed rather arbitrary to me."

Working with the French offered some amusing barriers for Bailey. "These people speak no English or very little English," said the director. "We're trying to teach them the Disney way of animating dialogue, which is you listen to the soundtrack of the actor over and over and over again until you can feel his performance and then you try to give that attitude to your character. For instance saying the words, 'Mickey Mouse.' When an American says it his mouth gets very wide. When the French say it, the mouth forms a different shape, so their dialogue looked like French characters talking."

The complexities of animation were routine for Bailey and his crew. The challenge was in updating the character. "The only real hurdle was making an edgy Mickey cartoon without going too far over the line. Part of the reason for doing this cartoon was because we could take the benign corporate image Mickey and, because it's another brain in his body, we could have a lot of fun with it and rough it up." □

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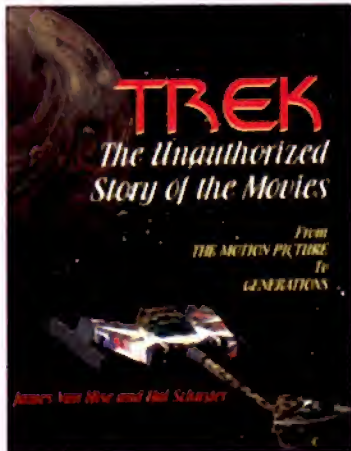
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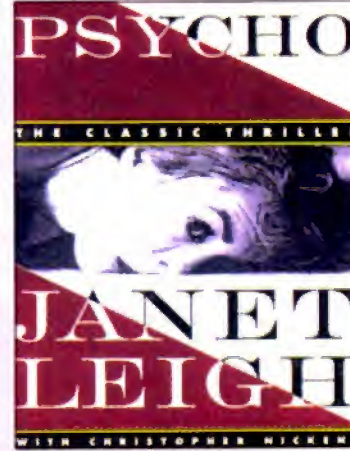
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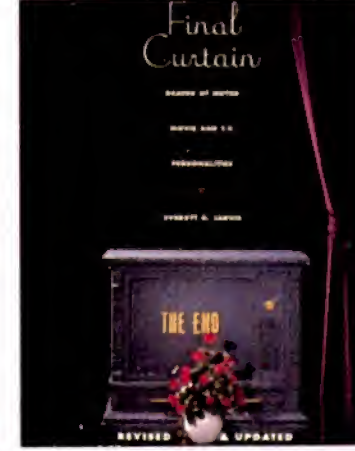
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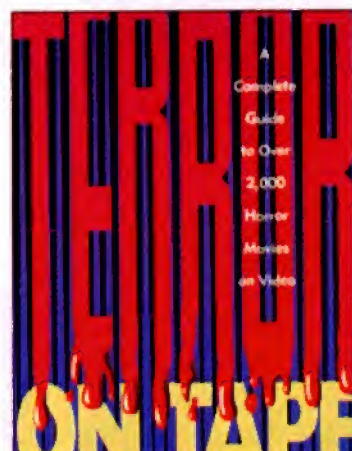
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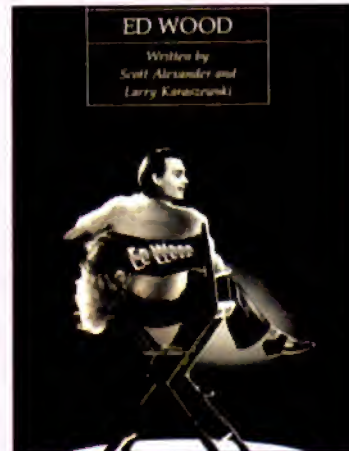
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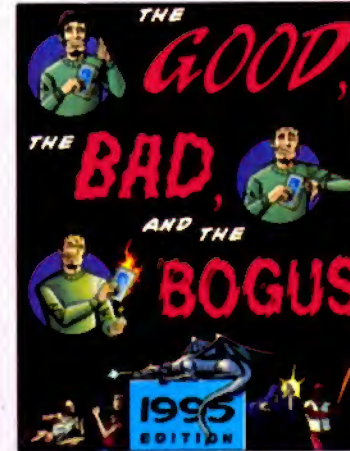
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REVIEWS

FILM RATINGS

- Must See
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor

THE ALIEN WITHIN

Directed by Scott Levy. Showtime. 7/95, 75 mins. With: Roddy McDowall, Alex Hyde-White, Melanie Shatner, Don Stroud, Richard Biggs.

The second of the films produced for Showtime cable under the banner "Roger Corman Presents" went straight into the dumpster after a promising start. *THE ALIEN WITHIN*, written by Alex Simon, who did a better job on the series' first entry *SUBJECT DEVICE*, is clearly derivative not only of *ALIEN*, but also of *THE THING*. An underseas mining operation gets a distress call from a nearby Russian installment and when they investigate, almost everyone is dead and they find evidence the Russians have unearthed an ancient alien craft. They bring back some of the bodies for autopsy and one survivor who turns out to be harboring the alien, a parasite whose presence can be detected because of the high metabolism rate it causes its host, as it consumes the host from within. Soon the alien gets loose and the small cast turns paranoid, as there's no way to tell which of them might have *THE ALIEN WITHIN*.

The ever reliable Roddy McDowall is top-billed as a discredited scientist forced to serve under macho Alex Hyde-White. He has the misfortune to be attacked by the alien creature (special effects by Michael Burnette Productions, which are no better than they have to be) in a scene which borders on humiliating. The cast also includes Don Stroud, who sports a scar on one eye and has turned into a sort of Gabby Hayes/Lionel Stander irascible caricature. The plot particularly bogs down in the middle when, in an effort to force the alien to show itself, various members of the cast enter a quarantine area where the air is removed. There is more tedium than tension in this repetitive sequence. None of the characters are in any way likeable so that viewers would have any investment in whether they lived or died, and the whole production has a cheesiness which can sometimes be amusing, but is not here.

● Judith Harris

BATMAN FOREVER

Directed by Joel Schumacher. Warner Bros. 6/95, 121 mins. With: Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones, Jim Carrey, Nicole Kidman.

You can imagine the Warner brass sitting director Joel Schumacher down and saying, "No more of that Freudian crap; it spooks the licensees." They wanted market-friendly action; brother, they got it. Big, loud and campy. *BATMAN FOREVER* keeps coming at



Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face, with Drew Barrymore as Sugar (l) and Debbi Mazar as Spice, big, loud and campy in *BATMAN FOREVER*.

you. Its collection of explosions, car chases, and fist-fights blurring into an undifferentiated mass as it all gets paraded before your benumbed eyes. Schumacher is so desperate to divorce the series from its more soulful predecessors that he retells the original story, *again* (this time replacing the original's subtle dramatics with a stab at that most bogus of pop-psych demons, repressed memory syndrome), and manages to orchestrate a weakly motivated, 11th hour change-of-heart for Bruce Wayne, having the formerly conflicted super-hero abruptly declare that he's now *happy* to be the Dark Knight. The closing fanfare is practically drowned out by the sound of cash registers ringing worldwide.

Val Kilmer cuts a handsome figure as the Bat, but is as much a victim of the mask as Michael Keaton was. Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face and Nicole Kidman as heatless love-interest Dr. Chase Meridan are pretty much lost in the cacophony. Manic money machine Jim Carrey as the Riddler switches between so many spandex and sequin outfits that he looks like he's auditioning for the American road company of *PRISCILLA: QUEEN OF THE DESERT*. Waste Not Department's John Dykstra recycles his laser-generated, soul-sucking effect from *LIFE-FORCE* for the Riddler's mind-reading machine. It's an artful bit of technology, but hard to discern amidst the din.

Oh, I forgot the plot. So did they. Guess they thought that was expendable.

● Dan Persons

LA BLUE GIRL

Directed by Raizo Kitakawa. Anime 18. 5/95, 45 mins. In Japanese with English subtitles.

The demons rise in all senses of the term in this graphic but amusing addi-

tion to the field of erotic, supernatural anime. Miko Modo, master of both ninja arts and the hyper-tantric discipline of total orgasmic denial, loses possession of the signet box that subdues the denizens of a dank and excessively horny netherworld, and thus ends up marked for the kind of assassination that can only be accomplished by creatures composed of hundreds of prehensile phalluses. The whole notion of women condemned to death-by-fucking would be outrageously offensive were it not for the sheer exaggeration of the action—elephants aren't blessed with such holding capacity—and the fact that Miko and sister (who becomes a victim of mistaken identity when she swaps panties with her sibling—*See, Mom always warned you!*)—tend to take the assaults in stride: "I'm screwed, literally!" is the ninja's most passionate response to the situation. The tape's packaging emphasizes that all characters are over the age of consent, and the subtitles make a point of establishing—with a suspect redundancy—that Miko is 18. Which only makes one wonder what courses she flunked that she's still stuck in high school. We may not be able to understand Japanese, guys, but we're not *blind*.

●● Dan Persons

CARNOSAUR II

Directed by Louis Morneau. New Horizons Video. 5/95, 82 mins. With: John Savage, Cliff DeYoung, Ryan Thomas Johnson.

Sure, everyone thought *CARNOSAUR* was a cheap rip-off of *JURASSIC PARK*. But now, a year later, we have *CARNOSAUR II*, and I don't see any *JURASSIC PARK II*. Anyway, it seems that the genetically engineered dinosaurs of the first *CARNOSAUR* laid some eggs, and the

government stashed those eggs in a mine that also happened to be a storage place for all sorts of nuclear warheads. Smart move! A contract repair crew is trapped in the mine with a lot of hungry, raptor-like dinos, a bureaucratic jerk, and a teenage computer hack (the sole survivor of the original staff of the mine complex).

Predictable and illogical, but not too boring. The dinosaurs actually look better full-figure than they do when an obvious puppet head or set of claws reaches out to grab somebody. Director Louis Morneau even adds a few "dino-eye" point-of-view shots (everything looks like a squeezed Cinemascope image), a nice little touch. The finale, borrowed from *ALIENS 2*, features a *big* dinosaur vs. a forklift, and while the giant lizard isn't as impressive or lively as its smaller cousins, it isn't badly done. The only big miscalculation is the gory dispatch of Anabella Holzbog, the femme member of the repair crew, who has one arm ripped out at the roots and her entrails eaten by a raptor, an unpleasant demise for a likeable character, and almost the *only* instance of such graphic gore in the entire film. Surprisingly, not a total waste of time.

●● David Wilt

CYBER NINJA

Directed by Keita Amemiya; Carl Macek (U.S. version). Streamline Pictures-Orion Video. 4/95, 73 mins. With: Hanbei Kawai, Hiroki Iida, Eri Morishita.

Another of the Japanese fantasy films imported by Streamline Pictures; *CYBER NINJA* is a 1988 Japanese film, *MIRAI NINJA*, set in the "distant future," as a rather hefty dose of scene-setting opening titles indicates. The Dark Overlord, through his sinister minions, the Dark Bishop and his "meca-ninjas," seeks to destroy the clan headed by Princess Saki. The Cyber-Ninja, although created by the Dark Bishop from the body of one of Saki's slain warriors, fights on the side of right. When the princess is kidnapped and taken to the Dark Overlord's fortress, Cyber Ninja, his brother (who does not know Cyber Ninja's identity), and a mercenary warrior set out to retrieve her.

The usual blend of medieval trappings (kimonos, swords) and science fiction (colorful rays, robots) yields the expected results (giant war machines that look like wooden barns with robot legs). Slightly more mature than the Power Rangers and their ilk, these films are an acquired taste for most. *CYBER NINJA* is filled with non-bloody martial arts action (the "meca-ninjas" don't bleed then they are stabbed, they just collapse in a bluish glow) that might satisfy the non-discriminating younger viewers, but there are animated cartoons coming out of Japan that have more sophisticated plots and more elaborate visuals than this rather cheap production.

●● David Wilt

CYBORG SOLDIER

Directed by Sam Firstenberg. New Line Home Video. 97 mins. With: David Bradley, Morgan Hunter, Jill Pierce.

Run-of-the-mill actioner set in the United States but—judging from the melange of foreign accents—mostly shot somewhere in Africa. The production values are adequate, with some good location shooting, but the attempts to recreate a U.S. ambiance are unsuccessful. David Bradley is a DEA agent (although the film confuses the DEA with the local police and pits Bradley against “federal” authorities, as if he *wasn't* a federal officer) whose partner is killed by druglord Starkraven (Morgan Hunter, who looks like a bald John Saxon). Starkraven is spirited away from death row by a government agency that turns him into a cyborg super-soldier. This was not a smart move, since the now nearly-invincible killer—renamed “Spartacus”—leads his fellow cyborgs in a revolt. Although the film does not skim, p on the action, these sequences are curiously unexciting, and an over-reliance on the slo-mo shots of stunt men tumbling off catwalks and being blown off their feet doesn't help. There are also several unpleasantly sappy sequences featuring “cute” little kids in peril. Bradley is okay as the hero and Hunter makes a good villain, but film is oddly out of kilter and unsatisfying.

●●David Wilt

THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD

Directed by Frank Oz. Paramount Pictures. 7/95. 96 mins. With: Hal Scardino, Litefoot, Lindsay Crouse, Richard Jenkins.

The fantasies of my childhood were that one of my pets could talk and that one of my toys came alive. It's surprising more children's literature doesn't take advantage of what are probably fairly universal wishes. Fortunately, Lynne Reid Banks wrote a series of children's books about toys that come to life in a magic cupboard—or is it the key which is magic? The first of these books gets somewhat homogenized to fit into a feature-length running time and many of its interesting incidents have been lost in an effort to make a more politically correct version for the '90s.

Omri (Hal Scardino) gets an old used cupboard for his birthday and puts a small rubber Indian toy inside. After locking it up overnight, the Indian mysteriously comes alive. He's a perfectly formed three-inch man called Little Bear (Litefoot) and the interesting part of the whole premise is that he has a life and history, hundreds of years ago during the French and Indian War. Omri makes friends with Little Bear and eventually shares the experience with his buddy Patrick (Rishi Bhat) who wants one of his own, and turns another rubber toy into a cowboy named Boone (David Keith). Initially, Boone and Little Bear don't get along and there is even bloodshed between them, but eventually they become friends. Omri realizes what a responsibility it is to take care of and protect living things and eventually comes to the conclusion we all reluctantly face, that



Diminutive star Warwick Davis, shooting craps in LEPRECHAUN 3, horror with just the right tongue-in-cheek touch from director Rodman Flender.

if you love something, you must let it go.

I had the misfortune to see this film during a packed kiddie matinee, from which I conclude that children younger than six would be extremely bored with this pleasant but visually unexciting story. The one sequence which could have been developed was of Little Bear fighting a rat as big as a dinosaur compared to him, takes place offscreen under the floorboards. Litefoot acquits himself admirably as the noble indian, but Hal Scardino seems a poor choice for Omri; he's got a little wispy voice and his many closeups only emphasize the unattractiveness of his teeth. Still, I suppose we must be thankful one of the overly cute Culkins wasn't shoehorned into the role.

●●Judith Harris

LEPRECHAUN 2

Directed by Rodman Flender. Trimark. 4/95. 85 mins. With: Warwick Davis, Charlie Heath, Shevonne Durkin, Adam Biesk, Sandy Baron.

This is the second opportunity we have to share the vision that Leprechauns are not only tricky, sneaky and greedy, but downright evil. To give director Rodman Flender credit, he films the screenplay by Turi Meyer and Al Septien tongue-in-cheek almost all the way, spitting off witticisms and asides in all the right places and allaying the somewhat more gory aspects of the film with surprising intelligence. Ultimately, this is a funny horror film that will maintain viewers' interest from beginning to end.

Thwarted on his thousandth birthday from marrying the daughter of his human slave, the Leprechaun throws a curse, vows revenge and then snaps the man's neck. A thousand years later the little buggler seeks out and marries his former slave's distant descendant. Her boyfriend, somewhat upset at this development fights to free his love and

destroy the evil menace. What results is a rather taut battle of wills, interspersed with destruction, gore and laughs. Flender keeps the plot moving by ignoring the details and focusing on the two objects of desire crucial to the end—the girl and the gold.

Fine acting by Warwick Davis as the Leprechaun, Charlie Heath, Shevonne Durkin, and Sandy Baron lends credibility to the premise while director Flender keeps the camera near invisible. The ending satisfies while leaving the door open for LEPRECHAUN 3.

●●Stephen Sawicki

ROBOCOP: THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Produced by Brian K. Ross, Kevin Gillis. Rysher/Skyvision Production. 1995. 60 mins. With: Richard Edens, Yvette Nipar, Aju Markuma, David Gardner.

ROBOCOP: THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT syndicated series from Rysher/Skyvision Productions, like Officer Alex Murphy, died much too early. The Canadian-produced TV show was an almost faithful adaptation of the concepts laid-out in Paul Verhoeven's brilliant original movie, and was certainly vastly superior to Irvin Kershner's plodding, pale sequel, while bearing only a cursory resemblance to the recent third installment by virtue of a few similar supporting characters. The only element not translatable to the small screen from Verhoeven's vision is his almost excessively comedic and horrifying level of violence. Actually, it's hardly missed.

Fully intact was the ever-present sense of media parody and cyber-bureaucracy gone wild in a dystopian society, with constant commercial asides from Commander Cash (an animated super consumer), ET-like new programs and corrective institutions like the Ronald Reagan Center for the Morally Challenged, where villains

like Dr. Cray Z. Millardo (Cliff De-Young) and Pud-Face Morgan (the gang member from the original film after his collision with the nuclear waste truck) are housed.

In addition to utilizing stock footage of Clarence Boddiker from the first film, the series created its own stable of recurring villains and vendettas, and supporting characters well served by clever, exciting scripts. For the sake of series continuity, the OCP Chairman (David Gardner) is the only significantly altered character. Rather than maintaining his ambiguous morality from the first film, and ignoring his exaggerated, decadent stupidity from ROBO II, the series cast him as an easily misled figurehead who can eventually be led to social enlightenment and untangling of the ridiculous bureaucracies OCP is always endorsing.

The most vital element of the Robocop premise got thorough examination in the series: the angst of Robocop/Murphy (Richard Edens) as he attempts to come to grips with his current existence and the memories of his lost life. Robo pretty much resigned himself to dealing with his wife and son anonymously, as evinced in several episodes in season one, despite the well-intended prodding of both Lewis (Yvette Nipar) and Diana (Andrea Roth) as representatives of the two worlds he's split between. In the second season the series upped the emotional ante and introduced Murphy's parents. Reconciling with his father (played by Martin Milner), a retired cop very much against robots as officers in his first episode, Robo has to deal with his father learning the truth about his identity in the last episode of the series. The meeting was bittersweet and emotional, with his father promising to keep the terrible secret from the rest of the family, a thoughtful note upon which to end.

●●Lawrence Tetewsky

SCANNERS: THE SHOWDOWN

Directed by Steve Barnett. Republic Pictures. 5/95. 94 mins. With: Daniel Quinn, Patrick Kilpatrick, Khristyne Haje.

Latest in the SCANNERS series was originally titled SCANNER COP II: VOLKIN'S REVENGE (as end title indicates). Daniel Quinn repeats his role as an L.A. policeman with scanner powers. Once again, Quinn gets to run through his wide and varied repertoire of facial grimaces, complete with bulging forehead veins, as he pursues a psycho-killer. The villain (Patrick Kilpatrick, who also gets to overact wildly) is a sort of scanner-vampire, sucking the life force from other scanners, leaving dried-up corpses in order to increase his own power. He wants revenge for his brother, killed in the line of duty by Quinn. There are plenty of nose-bleeds, distorted faces, and gross-out effects (courtesy of John Carl Buechler and MMI); and naturally, there is some head-bursting at the climax. While the series has wandered pretty far from its David Cronenberg origins, this entry is reasonably slick and well-paced.

●●David Wilt

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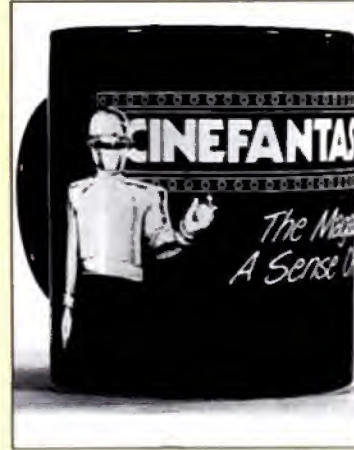
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JUMANJI

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In general, Hensleigh's retoolings succeed in overcoming the twin pitfalls built into Van Allsburg's central JUMANJI concept. Where a big-budget fantasy thrives on escalating and continually varied action, a story based on a board game forces a scenario based on repetition: roll the dice, make the move, endure the consequences. Where a film in which fantastic events are visited on the everyday world should steadily expand outward to encompass all the repercussions that result, JUMANJI keeps drawing its players back to the board and the need to get a piece on that last, magical square. Van Allsburg clearly was trying to overcome these drawbacks, but his forays into town—most prominently a chase sequence involving a witch doctor—don't succeed in shaking the feel of the gratuitous. For all the author strived to vary the action, his scenario seemed hopelessly mired in the rhythmic patterns of the game-play. Hensleigh's most valuable accomplishment may have been the way he succeeded in breaking the film from these fetters. Plot points, to a large extent, remain

those that were featured in Van Allsburg's script, yet even as the scenario draws back to focus on the game board, Hensleigh manages to keep the feel of greater scope, of a story that expands beyond the simple mechanics of a game.

In the tradition of contemporary script craft, one issue begged by both authors was the question of visual style. While, at points, both scripts directly reference Van Allsburg's drawings, no attempt has been made to compel the filmmaker to duplicate the artist's neo-surrealist vision. This is understandable: a film's look is generally considered to be under the director's purview; it will be up to Joe Johnston to determine how much of Van Allsburg actually reaches the lens. But beyond tradition, the JUMANJI people may have had yet another reason for avoiding a too-close translation of the book's visuals, a reason that issued from the casting of Robin Williams. After all, Mr. Williams has already appeared in a film that directly referenced the work of Rene Magritte. It was, in fact, his last attempt at fantasy, and if the actor was able to recognize the inspiration behind Van Allsburg's illustrations, he

himself might have warned authors, producers, and director off too slavish a reproduction.

He'd be well justified. That film was named TOYS. □

CAPTAIN ZOOM

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ironically, as the producer of Zoom's kiddie show.

The \$4 million production was shot in an incredibly tight 22 days on a sound stage in east Vancouver that had been the home of the short-lived Fox series M.A.N.T.I.S. "We had an opportunity to shoot at Universal Studios in Florida but when you do something as ambitious as this, where everything has to be built from scratch, we thought it was best to come to Vancouver," Levant said. In fact, they were able to make do with some of the old M.A.N.T.I.S. sets. "We were also able to use flats that were repainted."

Shooting in Vancouver also enabled Levant to take advantage of the lower Canadian dollar and the local effects houses, which have grown in stature thanks to the numbers of American productions filming in town. "We wound up doing our CGI work here and our compositing," Levant said. "There are a lot of good

people here looking for opportunities." □

NADJA

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was pretty wild."

To stand in for the wilds of Transylvania, Almercyda filmed in Central Park, and at an abandoned hospital that doubles for Dracula's castle. "We went into the Chapel of a building that was the first cancer ward in Manhattan," said Almercyda. "It was a sort of beautiful wreck, off of Central Park West, that had been all burnt out. We went in and cleaned it up, but it was actually a very dangerous place to work in. We had to pay a lot of insurance money to shoot there."

With a restrictive budget, Almercyda relied on simple, but effective techniques, including lab effects, such as printing positive film negative (recalling NOSFERATU), lingering dissolves, and the use of found footage, (a shot of Bela Lugosi from the public domain WHITE ZOMBIE). When combined with the very effective impressionistic soundtrack, designed by Stuart Levy, NADJA proves to be a truly mesmerizing experience, and a worthy addition to the vampire genre. □

LETTERS

LEGAL DISCLAIMER DEPT.

Does this sound familiar?

"Radio astronomers are astonished when they receive signals from a distant galaxy. When decoded, the signal proves to be instructions for assembling a DNA molecule. The scientists do so and when allowed to replicate itself, the molecule eventually develops—with beautiful speed—into a human embryo, which, in turn, just as quickly, grows into a beautiful young woman. Unfortunately, she has peculiar and frightening powers and it's decided that she must be destroyed."

Well, it's not the plot of SPECIES. It's a summary of the plot of Fred Hoyle's classic science fiction novel, *A for Andromeda* (1962). Interesting, eh?

Ron Miller
King George, VA 22485

[SPECIES screenwriter Dennis Feldman claimed familiarity with the work of Fred Hoyle, but said he's never read the novel in question. Any similarity, it seems, is purely coincidental.]

CFQ DOWNSIZING EXPLAINED

I've noticed that since October 1994, your magazine has been about a quarter of an inch shorter than before. They called it "downsizing" on 20/20 last night. I don't think it's a big deal, but I think it would have shown some class if you would have told your readers about it.

Joe Moschett
Castro Valley, CA 94546

[Actually, you're the first to mention it, but for the curious, here's the scoop: We changed printers—yes, to save money. Our new trim size was supposed to be 10⁷/₈ high, instead of 11 inches. Ah, but the printer couldn't deliver what they promised, with books often 10³/₄ inches in size. After a lot of bitching and moaning, we got them to deliver 10¹³/₁₆ inches. We're back to our old, favorite but more expensive printer with this issue, so enjoy those extra sixteenths of an inch while you can.]

IN DEFENSE OF HARRYHAUSEN

After reading director Paul Anderson's rather crude remarks about Ray Harryhausen's film effects work in your June issue [26:4:8], I felt compelled to reply, both for myself and Ray's legion of fans

and friends. Ray Harryhausen is a film effects legend and the recognized master of the technique of stop-motion animation. The emotion and energy that flowed from his hands into his animated characters has yet to be surpassed. Mr. Anderson should be ashamed of himself for his callous and thoughtless remark, and, 100 years from now, when film mavens still revel in the work of Ray Harryhausen, Mr. Anderson's work will be gone and forgotten.

Alan C. Davis
Toledo, OH 43614

[For the record, Anderson, the director of MORTAL KOMBAT, opined that Harryhausen's "special effects look like shit." Though Anderson was unavailable for comment, we'd like to take this opportunity to apologize for him, as we're almost sure he now regrets having said so. And we'd also like to mention that in the same paragraph Anderson pointed to Harryhausen as his inspiration for making MORTAL KOMBAT and termed the master's films as "still classics."]

FULL MOON MISTAKES

I'm writing in response to your article on Full Moon Video [26:4:16]. I thought it was about time Full Moon got the respect it deserved. I became very disillusioned, though, while reading your article because I found numerous mistakes in John Thonen's Charles Band Filmography.

First of all, in DEMONIC TOYS, the demon does not wish to be reborn in the body of the girl hiding in the warehouse, but rather in the body of Tracy Scoggins' unborn son. Also in DRAGONWORLD, it is not Angus McGowan's son he bequeaths his castle to, but his grandson. Even at that, Yowler was not Angus' to bequeath to Johnny. Yowler was given to Johnny by the "fairy folk."

And now, concerning the Torchlight titles: the first Torchlight release was not entitled BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND INFINITY, but simply BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND. Also in TEST TUBE TEENS (aka VIRGIN HUNTERS), two not three teens do the time traveling.

I'd also like to respond to Thonen's insinuation that SEED PEOPLE was a deliberate rip-off of the 1956 version of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. Any-

one who pays close attention can realize the many distinct differences between the two movies.

I'm a very strong believer in the philosophy that every movie is a masterpiece within its own right, but the next time you decide to cover something as prestigious as Full Moon Video, try to get all your facts straight.

Dustin Hubbard
Tipton, IN 46072

SHALL WE BABBLE ON?

I especially enjoyed your coverage on BABYLON 5 before it began showing on television. However, I have seen very little coverage devoted to this television show in your magazine over the past two years.

I think that BABYLON 5 is currently the best show on television and that the show has produced exceptional episodes during its second season. I believe that this ambitious show deserves more coverage in your fine magazine. The overall story of BABYLON 5 is intriguing, the characters are memorable and the special effects are spectacular.

I would really like to see an episode guide to the series and interviews with the members of the cast and production crew. It seems that interviews with cast and production members from BABYLON 5 rarely appear.

Daniel B. Milks
Charleston, WV 25314

[We have a cover story and episode guide on BABYLON 5 currently in the works.]

IT TAKES ALL KINDS

I wanted to spend a moment talking about a show which I feel has been undeservedly overlooked. GERRY ANDERSON'S SPACE PRECINCT. I am a big fan of science fiction and will watch just about any film or TV show with a sci-fi theme—at least once. When I first saw the sidebar in TV Guide saying a new series was starting on Channel 11 here in New York, I was skeptical, but decided to set the VCR timer (it's on at 2:30 in the morning) and take a look. Ever since then I have been hooked, recording it every week and eagerly getting up to watch the show the next morning. The only other show I currently watch with such regularity is THE X-FILES.

What continues to amaze me is the conspicuous lack of recogni-

tion by the media, yourself included, of the existence, let alone the superior quality of the show. As a police show, I would put the quality of its scripts equal to anything I have seen on THE NAKED CITY, HILL STREET BLUES or LAW AND ORDER. As an ensemble cast, I believe this group of actors is as cohesive and well-defined as those on highly regarded shows such as M*A*S*H, THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW, THE MARY TYLER MORE SHOW and BARNEY MILLER. As a science fiction show I would say it's the best one I've ever had the pleasure of watching.

I hope I've aroused your interest enough for you to do a write-up in your magazine on SPACE PRECINCT.

Anthony L. Marshall
Staten Island, NY 10305

[Actually, London correspondent Alan Jones has filed an article about the making of the show. Is there another viewer out there who wants to read it?]

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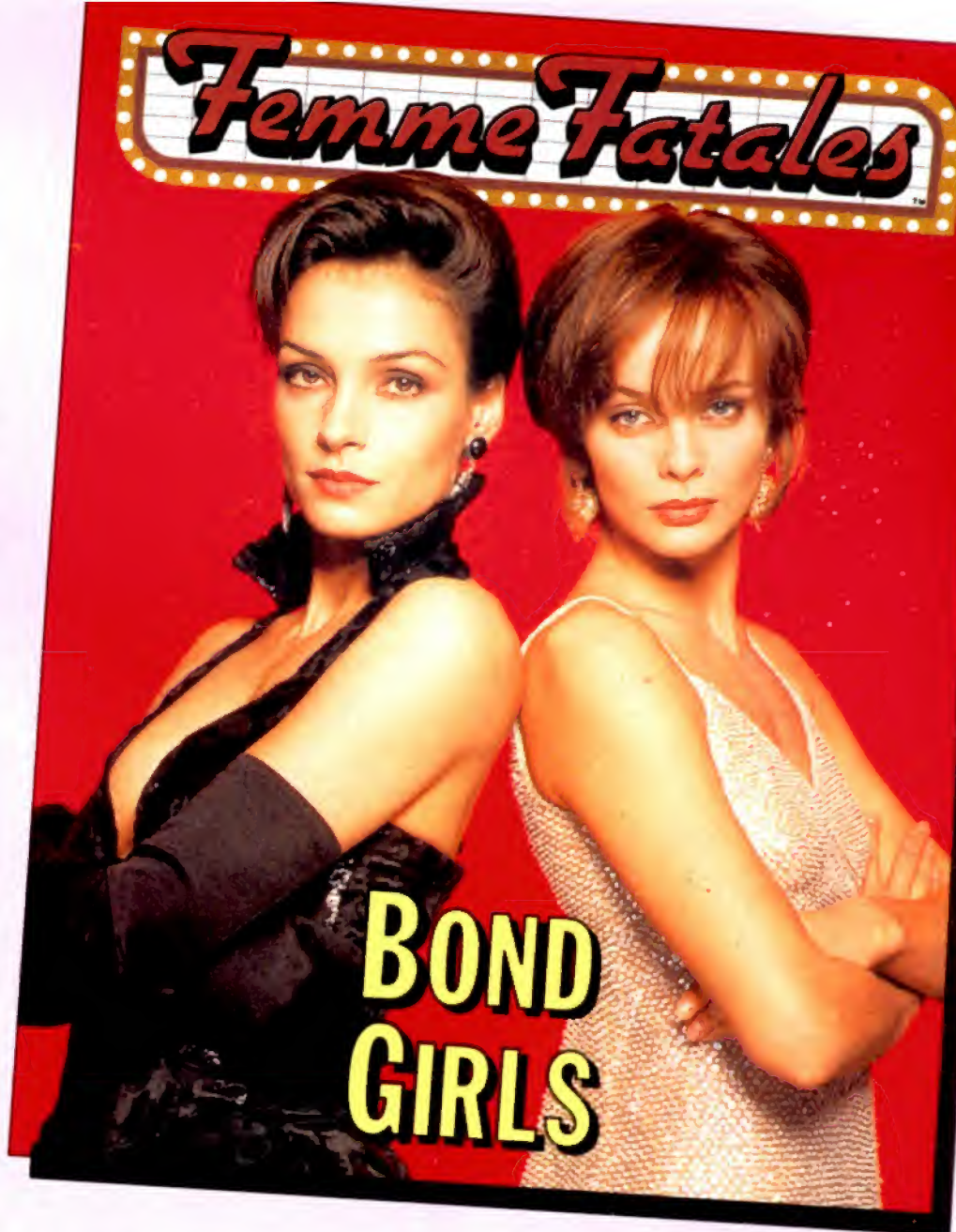
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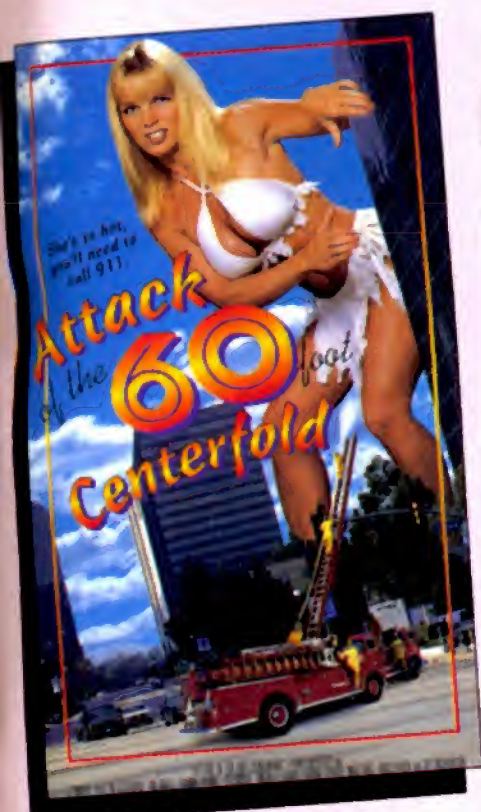
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You won't want to miss this exciting issue which includes a career interview with Rebecca DeMornay, the seductive psycho of THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE, who recently made her directing debut on Showtime's THE OUTER LIMITS; Julie Smith, the luscious Andy Sidaris starlet on teaching Elizabeth Berkley how to strip for Paul Verhoeven's SHOW-GIRLS; a career interview with Annette O'Toole, Superman's Lana Lang and the seductress of CAT PEOPLE, and much more. Subscribe now!



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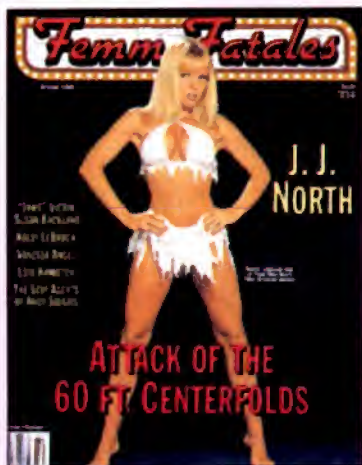
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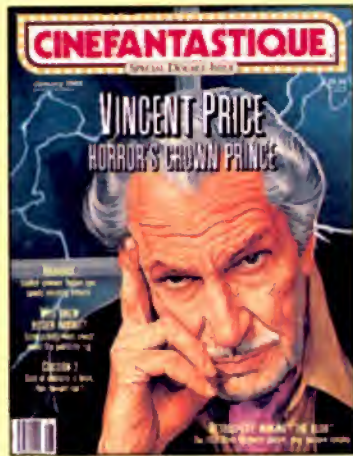
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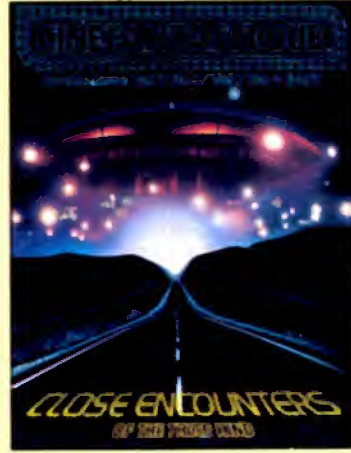
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